SHOILA BALA DAS

A LOOK BEFORE AND AF-

By

S. B. Das

CUTTACK.

DEDICATED

TO

THE WOMEN OF INDIA

' A good deal of talent is lost in the world for the want of a little courage."

S. Smith.



Kumari Shoilabala Das, ex M.P.
at the age of Eighty

FOREWORD

Raj Bhavan,
20th April 1956.

Shrimati Shoila Bala Das' life is inextricably connected with the growth of Orissa in the course of the last 60 years or so. When I look back in my own imagination to the days when Shri Madhu Sudan Das chose to settle down in Orissa and work for her uplift, I quite clearly visualise the enormous difficulties which he must have undergone to bring up a Province which was, for no fault of hers, utterly neglected by the then British Government. It was open to Shri M. S. Das to have chosen to settle down in Calcutta where he had the opportunity to rise to his full stature, but he chose to work in Orissa because of the sympathy for his kith and kin which was in his blood.

Shrimati Shoila Bala Das was not only the daughter of Shri M. S. Das but was also his virtual Secretary in all his undertakings. In that way, the life of Shrimati Shoila Bala Das is intimately connected with all the activities of Shri M. S. Das. In matters of education, social reforms and of political awakening, Shrimati Shoila Bala Das worked directly under Shri M. S. Das for over half a century. Whatever we see today in Orissa owes its origin to Shri M. S. Das' conception and Shrimati S. B. Das' hand in operation. In the field of women's education in Orissa, particularly, Shrimati Shoila Bala Das' name will go down in history as the pioneer. Today she is an octogenarian but her energy surpasses that of many youths.

She has now written her Autobiography which, I am sure, will throw a flood of light on that period about which we have no written record so far. How one wishes that Shri M. S. Das had written his Memoirs for the benefit of the coming generations. From the point of view of the study of the current history of Orissa, Shrimati S. B. Das' Autobiography will indirectly throw light on the conditions prevailing throughout India in those days when the country was completely in the grip of foreign rule without any hope whatsoever of recovery. I congratulate her on her contribution and convey, in this short Foreword, my gratefulness and that of my generation to her for what she has done for Orissa in this long period of about half a century. I trust her Autobiography will be popular reading and helpful to students of history.

Sd. H. Mahatab,
Governor of Bombay.

INTRODUCTION

I have great pleasure in writing few lines as a Foreword to a small book that has been written by Miss Shoila Bala Das.

I have known Miss Das for more than half a century to be precise from 1897 when I joined my service as an Assistant Magistrate and Collector at Cuttack. While in Cuttack my wife and I came in close contact with Miss Das and a great personality in her father Mr. M. S. Das—the Great Madhusudan who may verily be described as the maker of Orissa. A close friendship sprung up between my wife and Miss Das—a friendship that continued unabated till my wife died many years later.

Ever since 1897 I watched the career of Miss Das and my wife and I often felt great delight in observing that Miss Das in all her doings and activities followed the high principles of her illustrious father. Miss Das's activities were not confined to one or two matters only. They were widespread and covered many spheres of life, as will be amply borne out by the events narrated in this little book.

Miss Das has been instrumental in securing for the members of her sex a number of rights and privileges that had till then been all denied to them and for this she had to fight many a tough battle with the authorities. Miss Das had indeed been a born fighter, but if a fighter, she has, like her father, always fought for the weak, for people who have been in trouble and distress and fought for justice against injustice.

Some of the reminiscences of her life as have been mentioned in this little book will be found highly interesting and the reader will, I am sure, get from them not only great pleasure but high enjoyments as well.

S. C. MULLICK.
Ex. Judge, Calcutta High Court.

None can correctly appraise the work and worth of Madhusudan Das unless he takes into account the training he imparted to Miss S. B. Das, which enabled her to distinguish herself in various spheres of public activities. Miss Shoila Bala Das is a daughter of Madhusudan Das's life long friend late Sri Ambica Charan Hazra. She was born at Madhusudan Das's house in Calcutta and he wished to make her his own child being childless and trained and educated her. After her mother's death he took her and gave her his own name and she was known to the public as Madhusudan Das's daughter, with the result that she has been a very prominent figure in Bihar and Orissa in advancing the cause of Indian Women.

While Miss Das was in England in 1907 it was decided by her guardian that she would be presented at the Court of Their Majesties-King Edward and Queen Alexendra. As she did not wish to appear before Their Majesties in English costume, a great commotion was thus produced by her stubborn attitude, as the Sari was not regarded till then as a recognised Court dress. She was asked to follow the prescribed court formalities and etiquette, but she would not agree and she insisted that in paying her homage to Their Majesties she would adopt not only her country's costume, but also the Indian mode of salutation. At last the permission was given to her and she was presented.

Miss Das has worked all her life for the uplift of Indian Women and among her many valuable services may be recalled her securing for them the right to practise in the Indian Law Courts, by having the Indian Legal Practitioners' Act amended. It was through her and her sister's persistent efforts that Government brought in an amending Bill, so that the women in India will have the right to practice in Courts of Law.

She was for years a Fellow of the Patna University and was also elected to the Syndicate, in which capacity she acquitted herself creditably. In 1924 she was nominated a member of the Utkal University. It fell to my lot, as the Law member of the then Provincial Government, to appoint her as an Honorary Magistrate, and she was the first woman in India to hold that office in Patna for years with great distinction.

Her works in the Education field in Orissa are well known. She was the pioneer in the Womens' higher education in Orissa and all her movements are unique and will find a prominent place in the history of the emancipation of Indian Women.

SATCHIDANNANDA SINHA,
Vice-Chancellor,
Patna University.

I deem it a privilege to be asked to write a preface to the memoirs of Miss Shoilabala Das. I met Miss Das years ago, when the All-India Women's Conference met in Patna for its third annual session in 1928. Since then we had met at other conferences. Then there was a lapse of over twenty years when we did not meet at all. In May 1952, we met again in the political arena, now as colleagues in the new Council of States. Living almost next door to each other in the Western Court, we walked in and out of each other's company and shared our thoughts without reserve.

What impressed me most in, and evoked my admiration of, Miss Das is her utter honesty and forthrightness. It is not in her nature to mince matters or beat about the bush. She would call a spade a spade, and the book is full of such incidents which show up the consequences of her behaviour when faced with arrogance or injustice. We may doubt the helpfulness of such a behaviour but we cannot deny that it has its advantages with honest people. And in the last analysis, Miss Das's methods have not failed. Her various activities throughout her long life of public work bear testimony to it.

In Delhi Miss Das took full advantage of her age and experience. Commanded ministers and deputy ministers about as if they were her own children. She was universally loved and respected as the "Grannie of the House." Her sense of duty, her constant concern for the welfare of women and children, her desire to get all possible help from the Centre for Orissa made her almost the only spokesman from Orissa in the Council of States from the Government Benches. If she found the Council debates repetitious and dull, meaningless and wasteful, she also found in Delhi opportunities for acquainting the ministries with the problems of

Orissa. More than that, any person in distress found in her a sympathetic listener; and indeed no pains were spared to help the needy or bring justice to the oppressed. I am sure that she will be missed by the many whose cause against injustice she upheld; but gratitude will brighten the evening of her life.

What is said above refers only to the last two years of her life in Delhi. Her work in Orissa continues; and will continue as her vitality is undiminished. She still has the joy of living; age certainly has not withered her. Miss Das is a rare personality. She has tremendous enthusiasm for doing things; her spirit of adventure, worthy of emulation, will put many younger people to shame. She is buoyant and every difficulty is a challenge to her and she meets it like a seasoned fighter. Today her chief concern is to make the life of women in India better than what it has been hitherto. She feels concerned about their general backwardness because she believes, as many of us do, that unless they are educated and given opportunities to participate in national life in a larger measure, the pace of progress will be slow. This of course is an undeniable fact.

Miss Das's love of work, innate sense of justice, courage and persistence in getting things done are qualities which women should learn from her. They are the qualities of pioneer women all over the world and as a young country we need them in a large measure to insure our freedom. In conclusion I wish Miss Das long life and physical strength to carry out her various projects for the welfare of women and children in Orissa and success in her endeavours to raise the status of Indian women and the prestige of our land.

LAKSHMI N. MENON, M. P.
External Affairs.

It is a privilege to be asked to write these few lines introducing to the public a woman of such outstanding personality as Shoila Bala Das. I have known Shoila Bala all my life and have seen her go through her life with unabated energy in many and varied fields.

Born of Bengali parents, she was adopted by the Grand Old Man of Orissa—Madhu Sudan Das—the brilliant and unique son of Orissa. Shoila Bala's life was moulded in the halo of that brilliance. She came in contact with high and low, rich and poor, great and small. Her many friends including Governors, Judges and others in high position had often asked her to write an autobiography and now in her old age she gives to her friends " A look before and after." It is a most engaging story of a life with unique opportunities and experiences, used to the utmost.

Long ago I saw a Picture where a man and woman play the most important role. After some hair raising incidents in which the woman excels herself, the man, with a smile about his lips exclaimed—what a woman. I am sure the readers of this book, after they have finished reading will join with me, with smiles playing about the lips in saying—what a woman.

N. B. Shome,
Inspectress School (Retd.)

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LIFE IN CALCUTTA

PART I

CHAPTER I

"I AM BORN"

I AM a great talker. I loved to talk to my friends about some of my reminiscences of the past. I have innumerable friends. Some of my friends have been asking me again and again to put down in black and white some interesting episodes of my life and experiences. So at last, at the age of eighty-two when my eyesight is getting dim, due to cataract, I have asked a dear friend of Calcutta to write as I talk.

I am born in 1875. My birth place is at Chuckerbare Road near Bhawanipore in Calcutta. My parents are convert Christians. My father had my horoscope made. My birth planet is Aries, which is the ruler of my life. It rules the head and gives good mentality, and also a tendency to headaches and nervousness. It also says that the influence of my sun sign endows me with great versatility and vivacity that should make me very popular in social circles. Many changes in my life results from the rapid movement of my ruling planet Mars. I would be always inclined to look forward to a better state of things and would give evidence of great determination, impulsiveness, execution and enthusiasm. I would have a long life and would never be in want. I would be an earnest worker and be successful in my undertakings. I am a born fighter. Reader! From my life you will see how far this horoscope came true.

My father was Sri Ambica Charan Hazra. By embracing Christianity he was deprived of his ancestral rights, though he was the eldest son. My mother, Prasanna Mayee was more or less an invalid. I am the eldest of five children and sisters. We came from a middle class family, still to be found in the Midnapore district. My parents are both dead. Of the three

brothers the two eldest brothers are no more. My sister Shudhanshu Bala Hazra was a District Inspectress and afterwards became the Principal of the Ravenshaw Girls' High School. She is the first lady lawyer in India and was responsible for having amended the Legal Practioners Act thereby giving the right to women to practise in Courts of Law. She practised in the Patna High Court for two years. But she is no more. So I am practically alone in my old age, though my youngest brother is still alive and in Calcutta while I am in Cuttack all by myself. However, I sometimes get the companionship of my two friends—The Misses Shome—which I greatly value, and who help me as I write these reminiscences.

CHAPTER II

"I AM THE LEADER OF BOYS"

All my life I have liked boys more than girls, men more than women. It is I feel due to my sun sign. Even as a child I liked the company of boys more than that of girls. Courage, adventure, hardships ever appealed to me. I enjoyed games, liked swimming, running, kite flying and climbing with boys. Once at a dolls wedding I officiated as priest, being dressed up like one. I chanted Mantras of my own making. It was a successful wedding since the parties spent two thousand rupees to ensure its success.

Sometimes the boys refused my company in a daring aventure, being a girl. But in the end they always gave in. My spirit of adventure being superior to their own. While coming back from the Day School, I joined the group of boys, planning the afternoon's adventure. In the adventure of helping ourselves generously from the garden of our neighbours, without their knowlege, fruits or flowers which happened to be in that season. I loved mango season the best. I used to climb up the trees like a squirrel and plucked green fruits throwing them on the heads of my younger friends.

Sometimes, we went swimming in some half a dozen tanks which were in the neighbourhood. I liked moonlight swimming best. The boys taught me various arts of swimming and encouraged me to cross the tank from end to end an easy first. I was never caught, never failed. Many a time my mother scolded me for keeping the company of boys. But I always found boys more full of spirit, undertaking and intelligence than girls. I could not resist the temptation of being with them and sharing their sports. They did nothing without consulting me. Even the bigger boys always considered me their leader and mentor. My childhood days up to the age of ten spent in the company of these dear boys were golden days, almost all of them are no more. I am the only one left with those golden memories.

"Tis the last rose of summer
Left blooming alone."

CHAPTER III

"I AM THE LITTLE HOUSE WIFE"

I have already mentioned that my mother was an invalid. My father's circumstances were not such as to allow him to keep a number of servants. My mother was very particular about cleanliness. On no account would she allow us to eat or drink out of any other utensils, but in special kind of refined brass, which must be cleaned till they would shine like gold. Servants would not attend to it well, so I was deputed to see to it, and often I had to do it myself. She was very fastidious about her food too, and I had to cook it often to satisfy her. I learnt cooking from my mother when I was only nine years old. I remember an incident. One day the cook did not turn up. My mother was in bed. I had two brothers. In order to give breakfast to my father at 9 a.m. so that he might go to office, I entered the kitchen and started cooking. In a short time I prepared three vegetable dishes and rice. Then proudly I placed them before my father. While he was eating with

great relish I asked him "Father, how do they taste?" Smilingly he replied, "Very nice, I have never tasted such nice curries." Never before in my nine years did I feel so proud and happy as I felt when I received my father's unstinted praise. But alas; it was shortlived. When I sat down to have my meal with my brothers they refused to touch such awful stuff. When I myself tasted them one after another, I found them so badly cooked, that they were not fit to be eaten. Alas for human praise. How shortlived they are. That day I waited for my father's arrival. When he did arrive I tearfully questioned "Father, how could you eat such awful stuff? Why did you praise me?". He put his hand on my head and said, "Child, it was your first effort. I know the trouble you have taken for me. I did not like to damp your spirit by telling you the truth, when I knew you would discover it in time. But to me it tasted like nectar when cooked by my little daughter out of her great love for me. I prophesy that you will be a splended cook in time." At the age of twelve, when I was at Simla with my parents, and a sister was added to our family, I really became a good cook under my mother's instructions. Daily I learnt to cook a new dish or sweetmeats. So even at the age of eighty-two I love cooking new dishes. I myself love cleanliness. I love to see things in their proper places. From childhood onwards that habit was instilled in me. Things not in their proper places seem to make me unhappy. When I used to come back from the day school (I was compelled to give up the pleasure of roaming with the boys when I was ten years old) my great delight was to bring orderliness out of chaos. My brothers were famous for their untidiness. After that I took pleasure in sitting down mending the clothes of my little brothers. In fact the responsibility of running the household fell on my sholuder. I did not grudge it, but I considered myself the most important person in that little household. My father gave me the bazaar money and I managed things as nicely and economically as possible. Since then keeping of accounts has become a second habit with me. It saved me in after-life from utter ruin.

I was also a good nurse, looking after my baby brother and sister. I led them, I fed them, I mothered them and I put them to bed. When ill, I nursed them. To discipline them was my duty, to love them was my pleasure. Even when they were quite old they got into the habit of consulting me and asking my help in their difficulties, and I got into the habit of seeing them out of their difficulties.

This home education fitted me well for after life. In various circumstances it helped me to stand on my feet. Here I first learnt how to save a penny by opening a Savings Bank account. I got five whole silver new rupees from my father on my twelveth birthday. Possessing so much money I felt myself rich. I went on dreaming and scheming about this wealth. At last my better judgement suggested opening of an account book in Post-Office Saving Bank by depositing rupees two. This account book is still in my possession. And the habit developed with age—my wealth accumulated. Since then every month half of my pocket money went to the Bank. Thus in future I became rich ! !

CHAPTER IV

"I AM BEING INTRODUCED TO M. S. DAS"

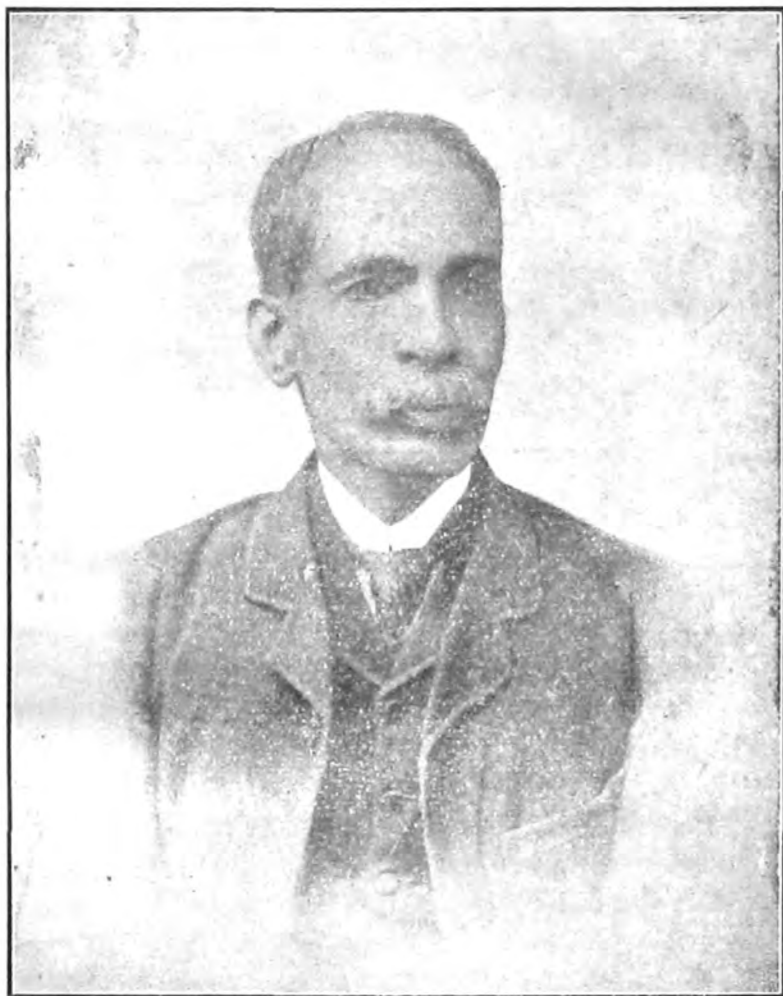
Mr. Madhu Sudan Das and my father both studied in the L. M. S. College, Bhowanipore. They were in to the same hostel and shared the same room. Consequently they became firm friends. This lasted till their death. They embraced Christianity on the same day and in the same Church. Consequently their friendship was cemented on religious grounds. When my father brought my mother from his village Hindu home she was brought to Mr. Das' house. Mr. Das was married then to a Bengali Christian lady. I was born at Mr. Das' house. Both Mr. Das and his wife took great interest in me. But as my father was in the Government of India service in the Finance Department, the friends were separated. After the death of his wife, Mr. Das left Calcutta and came back to Cuttack, his own native place.

In the year 1888 Mr. Das, after our return from Simla, came to see us. This was my second introduction to him. He at once took a great interest in me. He asked for my mother's permission to adopt me. But my mother would not give her consent. Owing to my mother's ill health he insisted that my father should take leave, come to Cuttack and stay at his house for two months. We came to Cuttack in 1889. I was very interested in his childhood's adventures and got attached to him. Finding that I was a kindred spirit he wanted to educate me. He wanted my parents' consent to send me to a boarding school in Calcutta. They readily gave their consent. From this stage I came to know Mr. Das well. After my mother's death in 1892, he brought us all to Cuttack to stay with him. My father married a second time and stayed in Simla. So we brothers and sisters stayed at Cuttack, which was our home. Mr. M. S. Das brought us all up. After I passed my I.A. Examination I was adopted by him and introduced to the public as his daughter, which enabled me to carry on with greater facility his activities for the welfare of the people of Orissa, especially in the cause of female education generally. I am thankful to God that his choice of a Bengali girl as a daughter was not in vain. Though he was criticised by many of his Oriya friends and relations in thus choosing a Bengali and not an Oriya girl, on his death bed he expressed his satisfaction on having adopted me, for I fulfilled his expectations.

CHAPTER V

"I AM BEING EDUCATED"

I had my elementary education in the London Mission Girl's School, but the foundation was weak, as I had to go to Simla for eight months in the year with my parents. When Mr. Das took up the question of my education he sent me to the Bethune School. I became a boarder and was admitted into the second class. The following year I passed the Entrance Examination. This year my mother died.



Sri Madhusudan Das in 1892

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the a... ...n and interest of your class all through. I congratulate you." This encouraged me to do even better for my pupils and I did manage to get along with my work very well. So you see my dark colour and my dress did more for me than learning and erudition in others. After a year, I passed two examinations and I was sent back to India in the winter of 1907. My father went to England to bring me back. The Principal of the training College and my guardians arranged that I should return to England the following year and pass the final examination, but circumstances kept me in my own Province to do Educational work of which I shall narrate hereafter.

Presentation at Buckingham Palace :—

Before I returned to India—in the winter of 1907 my guardian, Lady Spicer, decided to take steps to have me presented at their Majesties—King Edward and Queen Alexandra's Court. No Indian could be presented unless the India Office was satisfied regarding his or her social status and other qualifications. In my case India office found out all about me from India Government and gave permission for my presentation at the first Court in March 1907.



Kumari Shoilabala Das,
presented at their Majesties Court at
St. James, Palace, London in 1907

I found that the British Court is very exclusive about receiving people from other countries and thorough enquiries are made concerning women who are to be presented and if after such enquiries the Court officials are satisfied the permission is granted. It is a great thing even for well-connected ladies in England to be presented at St. James' and any lady who has been so presented at their Majesties Court, has entry to all the highest places and courts of Europe and other Societies that count in the world, and such a person also get the privilege of being presented to His Holiness, The Pope, and get the private entry to the Viceregal Lodge in India.

It is enough credential for a hostess to know that a lady has been presented. Invitation cards pour in for her from different places for different Society functions and also to country houses of ancient Lords. It is as if by a magic wand all the doors of the best houses are open to her, even if she were a total stranger. Such is the importance and honour of being presented at a British Court.

Rich women all over the world seek to enter this magic circle and all the leading hostesses in London are sought after every year to help rich women to be presented. In many cases large sums of money or presents are given to Society hostesses for this purpose and in many cases even money—which is power—has failed to open the doors of the British Court. I did not seek for presentation neither did I understand its value, but as my guardian desired it, I fell in with her wish.

The preparation of my Court dress was a matter of great importance to the India office. Lady Curzon-Wyllie, the wife of the then Aide-de-Camp of the Secretary of State for India was instructed to see that I appeared before Their Majesties in accordance with the circular of the Court Regulation regarding the presentation dress. When I was taken by my guardian to Liberty's the most fashionable shop in London for Court dress, a real battle began with my guardian. I was not ready to appear before Their Majesties in borrowed plumes—English Court dress—I plainly made it clear that I would not appear in

any other dress but my national costume—Sarie. A great commotion was started in the India Office and with the Lord Chamberlain in Buckingham Palace, as Sarie was not a Court dress and there was no precedent of any British subject ever being presented in their national costume. I was the first British subject to be so presented. I was more than once asked by Lady Wyllie to follow the court formalities and the prescribed etiquette but I firmly told her that I would appear as a British subject in my national costume. If that be denied to me owing to the strict formalities of the Court, I would forego the honour and the pleasure of being presented. As the India office and the Court authorities wished to see me presented and found me so determined in the matter of my dress and salutation, all Court formalities were waived and I was allowed to be presented dressed in a Sarie and made my 'pranam' to Their Majesties. I did not wear any glove or carry a boquet. I was the solitary exception in this in March, 1907, the first Court of the season.

The great day arrived and it was bitterly cold I went to Buckingham Palace with my guardian Lady Spicer and Sir Albert and were shown to the first Ball Room which was already crowded with ladies. Their dresses and jewelleries were magnificient. The whole ball room looked like a fairy-land. Two golden thrones were placed on a little dias. Golden galleries ran to the left of the room. Red carpets were placed on the floor and chandeliers were sparkling along with the jewels of the ladies. I was admiring the beautiful scene all around me. The ladies were admiring my Sarie and I was admiring their dress and jewels. So we were a mutual admiration society. I was told by the Duchess of Devonshire that when making my salutation, I should look up to the Queen. When my name was called by the Lord Chamberlain, I walked straight on and then went into a right hand side room where two pages were waiting whose duty it was to roll and unroll the train of the dress of those to be presented. When they saw me they smiled as they had no duty with me. I came into the Ball Room, walking slowly, where Their Majesties were seated

on the thrones—the Prince and Princess of Wales and their children were just behind Their Majesties. The whole Ball Room was so quiet that one could hear even a whisper. I walked first to the throne of the King. All eyes were on me and I felt nervous, but I bowed my head and with folded hands I made my 'Pranam', then I walked a few steps and did the same to the Queen and looked up to her. I had the greatest distinction of receiving a smile from Her Majesty. The two pairs of eyes met—the Queen and her subject—and the Queen most graciously accepted the homage of her Indian subject.

After my presentation, when I was leaving the Ball Room, I was told by the Aide-de-Camp of the Royal household that he had a message from the Lord Chamberlain who told me "If you like to remain in the Court room and participate in the function like the other members of the Royal family and Royal guests, you can do so". Lady Spicer asked me to remain as it was a great honour shown to me to be allowed to remain in the room with the Royal family. I was then given a seat among the Royal family and guests.

After the function was over, the Lord Chamberlain brought me to the supper room and took me to my guardian where the Secretary of State for India and other high officials and ladies were present. I was introduced to many and congratulated on having such honour and privileges at the Court such as had not been shown to any lady before.

The London papers and continental Journals featured largely my Court dress and the novel way of my salutation. From America and several countries in Europe, I got congratulatory letters. My presentation and my national dress have since then created a precedence for other Indian ladies to be presented in a sarie. I made the sarie to be recognised as a Court dress and pranam as a form of salutation., through my strong determination verging on obstinacy. Thus you will see when I was in London for study, I made myself well known by the above mentioned incident and I was covered with invitations and enjoyed being the guest of many Lords and Ladies

in their ancestral country houses. I also had the privilege of having an interview with His Holiness, the Pope. During my stay in London, after my presentation to their majesties Court as I mentioned before all doors of the upper ten were opened to me. Presentation has a charm like a magic wand. It gets you anywhere and everywhere. Thus I was invited in the old country house of the Duchess of Devonshire to spend a week-end. It was some miles out of London. I was received very warmly by my hostess, after lunch she showed me round and pointed out to me some century old beams in which they take great pride. Next morning she took me round the village. It was springtime, woods were lovely and daffodils were everywhere and I plucked many. I was taken to a village carpenter's shop which reminded me of Goldsmiths, "Deserted Village." Then she took me to a village school where little tots from three up to girls of ten were there. I was asked by the Duchess to say a few words to them, I told them that I came from India to England to learn from them. The children were very pleased to hear this. After this a tiny tot of four was put on the table by the form mistress and he sweetly said to me "Miss Das, give our love to your little children"

I enjoyed my weekend very much and returned to London happy.

(b) Activities and Impressions :—

A High Court Judge of Calcutta who was on the same boat with us on my way to England was curious to know what my first impressions about England would be. I promised to let him know after I had been there for sometime. Later on I was asked to lunch at his place and I told him that I was impressed by the English people at home. He was surprised to hear this for he had thought the big shops and other attractions of London would impress me more. He asked me "Hadn't you met English people in India" ? I said "I had met hundreds" but asked him "Were English people in England the same as English people in India ? Their behaviour to us there is quite different to their behavior in England. English people in England met us on equal terms and helped us in a friendly

way. Even the organ grinder and cart driver had a sympathetic word and a friendly smile for us." He kept quiet.

I was in Cambridge as a paying guest in a lady's house. When I arrived there she was very busy writing letters and asked me to wait a few minutes. When she had finished she ran out to catch the last post. When she returned from the post she explained to me that once a year a boat goes out to a distant island—whose name I have now forgotten—where the people come running to meet the boat for letters. This lady had directed her letter to the Post Master there and had asked him to give her letter to any lonely man or woman who had received no letter, so that he or she might feel there were people thinking of them and wishing them well.

What a kindly thought ; would we in India have done a thing like that I wondered. ! !

I was the guest in the house of a nobleman. On Monday morning the hostess asked me what my plans were for the day. She said they were all going out to the country for the day and I could either join them or go elsewhere if I so desired. She explained that her maid was going to be married that day and would have her wedding reception in this house. All the silver things and dishes were put out for the use of the wedding party. The whole house would be at the disposal of the maid and her friends the whole day, the mistress and her family returning late in the evening after the whole affair was over.

It is such a unique thing it seemed to me such generosity, such kind and sympathetic treatment of a servant would indeed be rare anywhere. It gave me new ideas and thoughts and my impression of such people as these was both pleasing and instructive.

When we three Indian ladies first arrived in London, the India office had sent their lady representative to meet us at Victoria Station. But lo, an old lady of 75 had heard about us somehow and had come all the way from Surrey in the cold and inclement weather to give a warm welcome to us to her own

country, that we may not feel lonely and homesick on arrival. This needs no comment.
I was a guest in Lady Spicer's house. On Sunday after lunch we were sitting and talking. After a little while the host excused himself saying he had an important engagement then and would resume the talk after dinner. It transpired that Sir Albert had promised his little girl of 2½ years to take her to Hyde Park so that she could feed the swallows, with bread crumbs. Sir Albert was punctual to the minute and considered his engagement to give a little pleasure to his little girl as important as an engagement in his office or in Parliament. We do not have such notions about all our engagements and would think nothing of keeping a child or an important person waiting or even f getting all about such engagements.

Some incidents however made very bad impressions on my mind. For instance, in London I found in a gin shop a poor woman buying a pennyworth of gin and giving it to her baby to keep her quiet while she enjoyed herself in her own way by drinking. Such sights are uncommon in India and it was very repugnant to me.

Sunday evening at Hyde Park did not impress me favourably that men and women in a Christian country could behave in such an unseemly and shocking manner, seemed very repugnant to me coming from a non-Christian country. This also left a very bad impression on my mind.

Many a time I was asked to say a few words about India and Indian women in drawing rooms. Sometimes a foolish question about the unhappiness of our women had to be met and explained. I had to explain to my audience that the standard of happiness differed in different places and countries. The drawing room talks in London and discussion in country houses were interesting and instructive as I could in this way clear many wrong ideas about my country and could give much useful information.

Here I will narrate an incident which will show you what a wrong impression English ladies had about Indian women. Sir

Charles Elliot and Lady Elliot used to keep an open house for Indian students who wanted to drop in for tea or lunch twice a month. But very few Indian students went there. He had a beautiful house, and the garden full of roses and other flowers. One Saturday I was asked to lunch by Lady Elliot. The Duchess of Devonshire was there. I had a seat next to her at table. Lady Elliot said, "Duchess you love to hear about Indian women. Here is Miss Das, she will give you first hand information." She looked at me and said that she was told that Indian Women loved jewelleries very much. "Is it a fact?" she asked. I said "Duchess, I shall tell you what I have seen among English ladies, also among Indian ladies and then you can judge for yourself" I began by saying that here I find in the spring time invitations for garden parties were sent round. Ladies rush to the shops day after day to select fabrics for their garden frocks to suit their colour. Then patterns of Paris frocks are inspected. After a great deal of discussion with the dress-maker, the pattern is selected then comes selection of shoes, stockings, bags, parasols etc., to match the frock and the complexion. When the special day comes, they spend hours on make up and hairdressing and one finds such beauties at the party that one falls in love with them. Old and middle aged women, look like young girls.

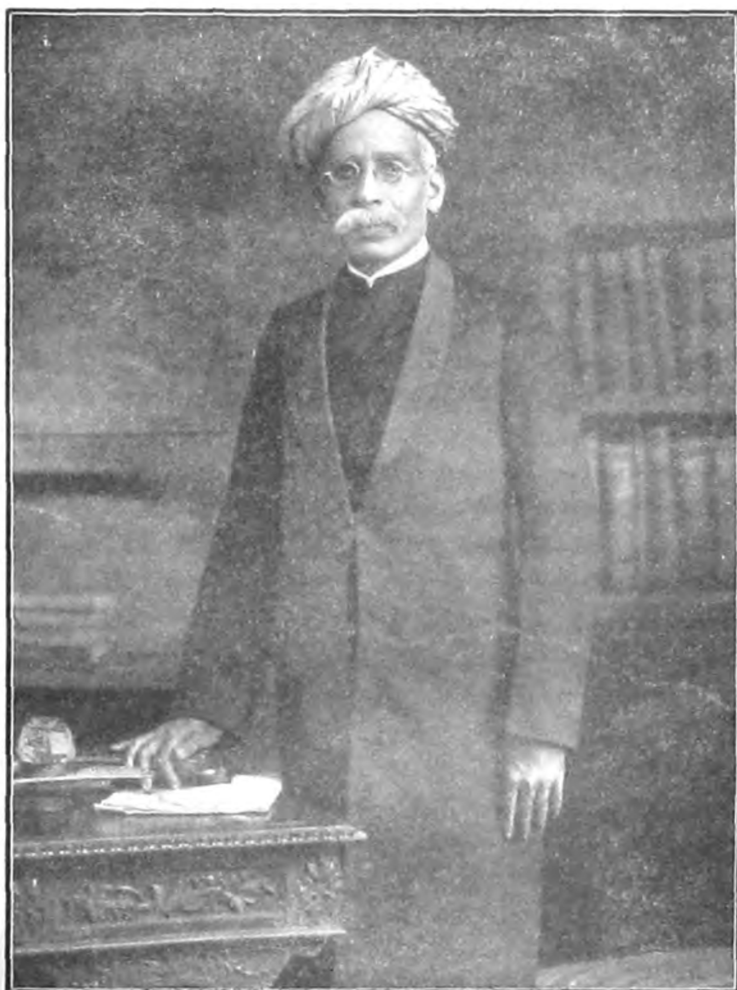
Whereas in India, the invitation for dinner or garden party or any party comes only about a week before the function. No one rushes to shops, any colour of the rainbow suits the dark complexion of the Indian ladies. They have many Saries of all colours and on the day of the function they select one of them and hardly take half an hour to put it on. As regards jewellery, it is a fact that Indian ladies—those who can afford it make heavy gold jewelleries they have them. They serve two purposes— they are ornaments and they are also a sort of investment to be used when in difficulty about money. With these they deck themselves on ceremonial occasions without giving much thought or time to their selection. Whereas Duchess I said. "I find in the Strand and Piccadilly jewellery shops full of false diamonds and pearls which are so attractive, but which no Indian lady would like to wear,

Yet these shops would not have existed if English ladies had not patronised them. Therefore I leave you to judge who like glitter and glamour and spend their time, thought and money over personal embellishment." My hostess then addressed the Duchess and said "Now I hope you are satisfied" she turned to me and said "I am very glad you have put things so well."

My gentle readers, I am not speaking of the present day ladies who are trying to imitate Western modes and fashions in dress, make-up etc., for my story is about half a century ago.

I loved to spend week-ends in real Christian homes. It was a pleasure to see the home-life. It was most instructive too. Sir Albert Spicer was a middle class man, with an income of about 3 or 4 lacs a year. He was an M.P. the Treasurer of the London Missionary Society and was in several business firms. He had thirteen children. Lady Spicer, though a Society woman, looked after the children well. One Sunday while we were at breakfast table a little girl of his, aged six years, went up to her and said "Mummy darling, will you buy my chocolate box? I have used up all my pocket money in buying this box. It was so lovely I could not resist the temptation of buying it, and forgot all about the subscription to be given to my Sunday School to-day for Indian children. I have no money to give, so please do buy my chocolate box." The mother looked at the child with love and kindness but said firmly "You should have thought twice before using up all your pocket money like this. I shall buy your box this time, but never again must you do such a careless thing." "Thank you, Mummy" she said, and ran upstairs to fetch the box down. The mother took the box from her and gave the child 2s, 6d. The child was very happy that she would be able now to give money for Indian children.

One morning while staying at the Spicers', at the breakfast table, this little girl was a little late in coming down to the table. She and her sister, a year older than her, went to a school a mile away. They generally walked as mother never



Sri Madhusudan Das in 1907 on the occasion of his visit to England.

paid for bus hire as she thought it was a good exercise for the children. It was a cold winter morning, and inspite of being wakened in time by the nurse, the child did not like to leave her warm cosy bed for a cold dip and dressing. Therefore she was late for breakfast. The mother said " Child you are late to-day and you will be late for your school. How will you reach there in time ? " Mummy, it is so cold," the child said " that I didn ot get up so early for a cold bath. I'll go in the bus and forego my chockie to-day " she looked quite happy and did not mind foregoing the chocolate. I, with wonder and surprise looked on thinking "What a mother ! Couldn't she give an extra penny to the child for chocolate ? What a difference, I thought, with our Indian mothers !

My father came to England in June 1907, to take me back to India. He asked me whether I would stay in a hostel or take a house. I said that I would like to have a house, do housekeeping and invite my friends. We had a beautiful house at Southerland Avenue, engaged half a dozen servants and a housekeeper. My father took his Mohammadan servant with him, who could not talk English. When he wished to say anything he would make signs and stare with his big eyes, which frightened the maids. He would also sit down on the floor. I had invited some of my friends and some M.Ps.' who were kind to me and in whose houses I had been a guest. The day previous to the dinner party in the morning, I was going out of London for the whole day, the housekeeper came and told me that all the servants had given notice to leave that day and she brought the account book and the money and one week's salary of the servants as they were leaving without notice. I told her I would look into the matter next day and left the house. When I returned in the evening, except the butler, every one had left. Now to stay in a London house without a cook, especially when one was expecting important guests to dinner was a great dilemma for me. I was told by the butler that the servants left owing to our Mohammedan servant whose ways they did not like. My father asked me either to cancel the dinner party or to ask them to a fashionable hotel. I said "No father, I

would entertain them in my own house. London is a place where you can do things in the twinkling of an eye if one spends money." I got a very good cook from the servants' bureau and two waiters from a hotel. Everything was in tip-top condition when the guests arrived, the first dinner party was a great success. I was congratulated by the ladies in having such good servants, when they heard the whole story they were surprised and paid me compliments. Thus the tragedy of of a dinner party ended happily. And the batch of servants I engaged again proved efficient and the butler wanted the hookah of my father when he left London to show his efficiency to other big Indians who would engage him. I liked English servants better than our own servants for their punctuality and efficiency. If you treat them with kindness they proved a great success. They would go out of their way to please you. But our Anglo-Indian friends after their retirement from service cannot get on well with them owing to their overbearing nature. Many of my Anglo-Indian lady friends have told me of their grievances regarding servants.

I could write a volume of all the interesting things I saw in England but I do not want my book to be bulky. So here I end my London impressions.

CHAPTER VII

"RETURN TO CUTTACK"

Educational Activities

(a) Ravenshaw Girls' School :—

As previously mentioned my father went to England and brought me home in the autumn of 1907. I fully expected to return to England in the spring of 1908, but that wish was not fulfilled.

On my return I was asked by the then D.P.I. of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to start Girls' High Education in Cuttack and Government would help me. Instead of starting a new school my father asked me to improve the existing Ravenshaw Girls'

School which was then only a Lower Primary School. I agreed and put my whole heart and soul to reorganise that school and make it a high school and a popular institution. It was uphill work. The education of giris, except up to the Upper Primary was almost nil. Neither the guardians nor the people, nor the Government was interested in Oriya girls higher education. I had to fight against great odds. The Missionaries, the officials and a great section of the public were not in favour of my starting a Girl's High School. The neice of the then Inspector of Schools, Orissa, had started a Girl's High School in Cuttack during my absence in England, with Bengali girls mostly of Calcutta girls and had the good fortune of being favoured by the officials. But I made up my mind to work inspite of all difficulties and make this school the first High School in Cuttack.

I took up the school with 15 girls on the rolls on 8th of February 1908 and increased the number to 300 in 1909. The Government promised to support me and give a grant equal to the amount I would raise. I undertook to finance the school and raised Rs. 500/- a month and demanded Rs. 450/- grant a month from Government and I was the Lady Principal and Honorary Secretary. The dispute between myself and the local authorities was so great regarding the status of the school and its finance, that the D.P.I. of Bengal had to come to Cuttack and decide the question by a visit to my school. His visit was a great help. He was so pleased to see the improvement that he decided to give me a grant of Rs. 450/- a month which I received in 1908, and stopped the grant of the other school favoured by the officials and the Inspectress of Schools, as he found that the Government would not be justified in giving a grant for education of girls who come from outside of Orissa as the school was primarily meant for the education of the girls of the province. This naturally made me unpopular with the local officials. I did not mind this at all as long as I had the support of Government. I was asked by the Government to form a Managing Committee and send the names to the District Magistrate for approval and through his recommendation, under grant-in-aid

rules, the school would receive the promised grant of Rs. 450/- a month from the year 1909. The local officials were most revengeful and you will see here through what difficulties I had to pass to carry on my school and make it a success. When I sent the names of the members the District Magistrate removed all the names and put in new names of his own selection. Under the rule of the Education Code the District Magistrate had no powers to select members but only to approve, the right of selection naturally was given to the Secretary of the School. I refused to have his nominees and he would not recommend me to the Government for the grant and so I did not get any grant from the Government for nearly 10 months in the year 1909. I had to manage the school with great difficulty. Had it not been for my father who paid the establishment bills of the school I would have been obliged to close the school as the monthly expenditure was Rs. 1000/-. One day I heard that His Honour the then Lt. Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa Sir E. Baker would visit Cuttack. I went to the then Commissioner of the Division and asked him to include in the programme His Honour's visit to my school. He refused saying "His Honour's time was all filled up and it would not be possible to have him even for ten minutes." I felt dissappointed but my spirit was not damped. I made up my mind to see his Honour's private Secretary without any appointment and request him myself to ask His Honour to visit the first Girl's High School in Orissa. His Honour came to the Cuttack Circuit House one morning in April, 1909. I went in the evening from the Cuttack Club to the Circuit House. I wanted to see the private Secretary of His Honour. When I opened the gate I found a short thin old man walking in the garden. Seeing me he came towards me and asked me whom I wanted to see. I said "I wanted to see the private Secretary." He said 'I am sorry, he is out,' 'Can I not do anything for you'? I asked him "Will you kindly take a mesage to the Private Secretary?" He said 'I shall be glad to do anything you wish me to do.' He then took me inside the house. When I was in his drawing room, he asked me to give him the message. I told him that the first

Girls' High School had been started here by me. The girls and the parents are eagerly expecting a visit from His Honour. Now they will be disappointed as His Honour would not be able to pay any visit for want of time. He asked "Have you been to the Commissioner to ask him to put His Honour in the programme ?' I replied "Yes." He asked me "What did he say"? I replied "The Commissioner said that His Honour's programme was full and he would not be able to visit our school." He said "His Honour will see your school and without seeing it he will not leave Cuttack. I assure you." Then he said "Good evening Miss Das." I came to know there that I was talking to His Honour and I was surprised to know how His Honour came to know my name. I went back to the Club. The Government House peon came and delivered a note to the Commissioner. The Commissioner left the Club followed by the the chaprassi. I knew why he was sent for and wished to know the developments. The Commissioner returned after a few minutes and seeing me at the Club, he told me that His Honour would like to see my school. Would 7 o'clock in the morning suit me to receive him at the School. I smiled and said "It will suit me very well, thank you for the arrangement." Again he said "Are you sure it is not too early ? Will you be able to bring all the girls to the school ?" I said "I will work the whole night to bring all the girls so please do not worry." The Commissioner did not like the idea at all. He thought that I might inform His Honour about all my difficulties in not getting the Government grant so his visit to my school should be prevented. His Honour visited my school and was very pleased and asked me repeatedly if I required any help from him. I answered him in the nagative. There were inside the school premises two or three Hackney carriages and the horses had made a mess of the place. The Commissioner turned to me and said "Miss Das, you should not have kept the Hackney carriages there knowing His Honour's visit." I replied in the presence of His Honour "You know under what difficulties I am working unaided, when I requested you to put His Honours' visit to the school on the

programme, you did not grant my prayer. Late last night you informed me of His Honour's visit to my school and you gave me such short notice that I had to bring the children to the school at 4 o'clock in the morning from their beds. As there is no carriage stand here I was obliged to keep the carriages in the school compound, so that after His Honour's visit I can send the girls home immediately. I am sorry that even for His Honour's visit I could not do otherwise." His Honour turned towards me, he had heard everything that I said and put a hand over my shoulder and said "It is quite all right Miss Das I am not displeased." The visit of His Honour was a landmark in the history of the school and it was the talk of the town how I had won a victory over the Commissioner.

As I did not get any grant without accepting the District Magistrate's nominees for forming my committee, I went to see His Honour at Darjee-ling. I was invited to lunch and I was asked at the table by His Honour how my school was getting on. I said "Not at all well." He asked "Why?" I replied, "Your officials are creating trouble for me" and then I told him the whole story how I would not and could not accept the District Magistrate's nominees. He laughed and asked if I went to the Commissioner and asked him to help me. I said 'Yes.' "What did he say?" he asked me. I was then quite excited forgetting that I was at the Government House lunching with his Honour. My father sitting on the opposite side winking at me so that I may not say anything further. I did not pay attention to it but said "Sir, when a civilian makes a mistake even when he knows it, he does not like to admit it for the loss of prestige and his brother civilians support him in his mistake, therefore the Commissioner supported the District Magistrate." He asked "What reply did you give to the District Magistrate regarding his nominations?" I replied that I wrote that his power was limited under the Education Code and that he could only approve and not select. And as I will not accept his nominee he and the Commissioner will not help me and thus I cannot get the Government grant without their recommendation and I do not know what to do. His Honour struck the table with his hand and said "Fight for

your rights Miss Das and your Lt. Governor will see you through: Now tell me what you want." I said "Without any interference of the District Officials and forming any Committee I want the Government to give me grant on my personal guarantee. I want Rs. 500/- p.m. as recurring grant." He said "Both of these will be given to you." And so this is the second victory over the Commissioner. I managed my school well and that same year I sent up a girl for the matriculation examination. She passed in the 3rd Division. I asked the Education Department to give her a scholarship to prosecute her studies for the I.A. examination at Calcutta. My request was rejected as my school was not recognised by the Calcutta University. I wrote to the member of the Executive Council, holding the education portfolio explaining why it was essential to give a scholarship to the first Oriya girl even though the school was not recognised by the University. The girls must be encouraged for the higher education. The effect of this letter was that the girl got a scholarship of Rs. 10/- per month. Then I approached the Calcutta University and requested them to recognise my school as a High School though there were not even 4 girls in the first two top classes. All the girls were in the 4th class studying the first book in English. So whoever used to come to visit the School wondered how I could manage to get what I wanted.

In those days when no one heard of girls higher education one girl passing the Matric Examination was considered a wonder. However the University recognised my school as a High School. I worked for five years as Hony worker and during this time the school became a real Girl's High school. I asked the Government to take up the school under their management. The D.P.I. inspected it and wrote in the Visitors Book that this is a really successful attempt in female education in Orissa and Government was willing to take it up. I handed over my school to Government on 1st March 1913 in a most flourishing condition. Since then the school has improved greatly. And I am proud to say that this school is a nucleus for the first Women's College in Orissa and it has been named by Government "Shoilabala Women's College" in recognition of my past services.

(b) Education Conference at Ranchi:—

In 1914 I was invited by Government to attend the Female Education Conference at Ranchi. The Conference was held for a week and I took some part in the discussions and my views were accepted. Through my efforts Government created a scholarship for a graduate lady to be trained in England. Government sanctioned a scholarship of £250 a year for two years. The Biharee members who attended the Conference opposed me saying it was not necessary to send a girl to England as girls were not yet ready to go to England. But I gained my point and Miss Nirmala Bala Nayak who was a graduate and was ready to go to England, got the scholarship. She became the Lady Principal of Ravenshaw Girls' School later on.

Encouraged by this success I brought up a resolution that Indian ladies should get the post of an Inspectress of Schools, I spoke about this resolution to the Chief Secretary and the D. P. I. They felt I would get no support from the members of the Conference as there were no ladies qualified for such a job. I strongly differed from their views and I challenged them saying that inspite of their opposition, I would gain my point. They said they would be glad to hear me speak and abuse Government, but never-the-less I would not get any votes. This conversation was carried on in a friendly atmosphere. I could not sleep that night thinking what I should do to gain my point. Towards morning my brain became clear and I felt sure of success inspite of all opposition. I arrived at the Conference and had to move my resolution first. All eyes were on me with a twinkle in them. The Biharees were surprised at my boldness. I first attacked the D. P. I. asking for the requisite qualifications for the post of the Inspectress of Schools. Then I pointed out that the Inspectresses who were sent out to India were women with only third class qualifications and they had great difficulty in examining schools as they had no knowledge of the language, custom and manners of the people,

whereas an Indian lady would have first class qualifications, and will be of good birth, and also know the language, manners and customs of the people with whom she was dealing. Moreover, she would not have *"an inherent hatred for the coloured race"*

After throwing this bombshell I sat down. The whole conference was taken by surprise by my bold speech and they all kept silent for two or three minutes. Then the President said in a serious voice " It is to be regretted very much that Miss Das had occasion to pass this remark, but she is justified in asking for the post of the Inspectress of Schools to be given to an Indian lady. The sanction must be got from the Secretary of State for India." Thus I won my point. Whether I was right or wrong in this I leave my readers to judge, but anything is fair in love or war.

The D. P. I. and the Chief Secretary said to me " We did not know you would throw such a bombshell to pass that resolution. Now tell us who made that remark? " I told them "You were all present on the occasion when an Englishman made this remark and so there is no necessity to mention name." It was a D. P. I. who had made that remark on the eve of his retirement at the Ranchi Government House dinner party. At Governor's request this remark never came out in the press. I knew it from a person who was present at the dinner party,

(c) Hindu Widows Training School :—

When working for the Ravenshaw Girls' High School, I felt the necessity for starting a Hindu Widows Training School to get trained teachers for High Schools. In Orissa, there were many Hindu Widows. I got half a dozen Hindu Widows who were willing to be trained. I prepared the scheme and sent it to the D.P.I., but it did not meet with his approval. I was determined to have the Training School. For three years I persistently fought for it. The heads of departments and other officials, knowing my past activities would not support my scheme or my working for it in an honorary capacity.

In 1920 Sir Edward Gait, the last Lt. Governor of Bihar and Orissa before the Reform, came to Puri. I saw him at Government House and asked him why Government censured my past work. He was surprised and said Government appreciated my work very much and was willing to recognise my services suitably by giving me Kaiseer-i-Hind gold medal, which I had refused. So there was no censure on my activities by Government. I then said that I wished to start a Hindu Widows' Training School, but the Education Department would not give me further opportunities to serve my country. He asked me whether I had any correspondence on the subject. I gave him the required papers, which he looked through and said he would return them after a week. I do not know what transpired when he went back to Ranchi, but I got a letter from the then D.P.I. that he was coming to Cuttack to see me in connection with the Training School. We met and discussed the scheme with the result that Government accepted the scheme and a Hindu Widows' Training School was started and I was offered the salaried post of the Lady Principal which I declined, but offered my honorary services which could not be accepted under the rules. So another Principal was appointed and the Training School went on successfully.

CHAPTER VII

(d) All India Women's Conference :—

The All India Women's Conference gradually became quite a forcible organisation and it started its constituencies in almost each and every Province, I was asked by the Standing Committee to start a constituency in Orissa. I did this and got hundred members. I became a Standing Committee Member from Orissa and started branches in Puri and Balasore. Every year, before the annual session of the A.I.W.C. we had our Orissa constituency annual meeting and passed many valuable resolutions many of which were given effect to by the local Government. We elected delegates. The Provincial quota was ten. The full quota of delegates could not attend but some attended the All India Women's Conference wherever it was held.

I fought a great deal with Government and got Travelling and Halting allowances for two delegates and sent educationits to attend the Conference. The importance of attending these meetings was realised by Government. In those days women's representation to various Bodies was almost nil. Through the efforts and activities of this Conference, Government first appointed Women Jail visitors, Hospital visitors and members of other Educational Bodies and I was appointed to most of these. We did a work of great importance by stopping the drugging of children by servants, by giving them small doses of opium. We passed resolution to stop this practice and made various resolutions asking for the control of the sale of opium. Ultimately Government helped us by making laws whereby the sale of opium to servants was stopped and thus the poor little children were saved. In those days Government was sympathetic to our Women's movements and when they found a band of educated women, doing educational and social work, they always helped and encouraged them. What a difference now under our Congress Party Government, unless a woman is a member of the Congress, however efficient a worker she may be, all doors to social and educational works are closed to her. This educational and social conference made us women come in contact with various kinds and classes of women in other Provinces. And this helped us to gain many experiences and broadened our outlook.

As long as I was a Standing Committee member, I used to take most of the delegates to Conference meetings. After I left Cuttack in 1921, others took my place, but the work suffered, with the result that this Constituent branch existed in name only. The old working members left and the women who took their place did no real work, though they enjoyed the privilege of attending Conferences, free of cost to themselves. Thus the Constituent branch of the A.I.W.C. which did such useful work at one time was in a moribund condition for sometime, but now it is completely dead. It is a pity that the women of Orissa are not in touch with the A.I.W.G. which is rendering so much service to the country.

PART III

HOW I CAME TO BE IN PATNA



The late Sri Madhusudan Das, in his Ministerial Dress

PART III

CHAPTER I

HOW I CAME TO BE IN PATNA

How I came to Patna :—

BIHAR and Orissa were under the administration of one Governor and Patna was the Capital. Under the Montague-Chelmsford reform, two Ministers were appointed with two members for the Governor's Executive Council. The position and salaries were the same for the Ministers and the Executive Council members. The late Lord Sinha was the first Governor of this Province and he appointed my father as the first Minister of Health and Local Self Government and P.W.D. My father went to Patna to take up his duties and I was left behind at Cuttack to settle matters and wind up the house and to get ready to go to Patna. My father went to Ranchi and asked me to come to Patna. I arrived in Patna, with my bag and baggage in May 1921.

CHAPTER II

"MINISTER'S DAUGHTER."

(a) Minister's House :—

Government did not allot any house for Ministers and my father found great difficulty in securing a house. He did not mind where he stayed, but I was disappointed when I found a small house had been engaged for me. I was asked to secure a good house, if possible, and my father was willing to pay whatever the rent was. But alas; neither love nor money could procure a house for the Minister's daughter! I had great difficulties with the house problem. The Chief Engineer of the P.W.D. told me that a plan for a Minister's house was ready and he could give me in six months time a lovely house for the Minister if only the Minister would sanction Rs. 75,000/- for the building of his house. I asked my father to sanction

this amount but he definitely refused. He said "All over the Province people are dying of plague, cholera and Kalazur. I need money to save people from these fell diseases and cannot afford to spend money for the building of my house. If you are not satisfied, you may return to Cuttack, for as long as I remain a Minister my conscience will not allow me to spend so much money on a Minister's house." After this I never asked for a house. I rented as good a house as I could get, made it comfortable and started a garden. This house was kept open day and night for people to come to him with their grievances. The 'Jamadar' had strict orders from my father that he should be informed immediately whenever anyone came to see him.

Thus I came in contact with various classes of men and learnt many things from them. Departmental injustice was a daily cry and I was often approached by the victims and repeated to my father what I heard.

(b) Car incident:—

The new Capital Roads were a beauty, one day I felt tempted to take out my car and have a good run. I spent an enjoyable hour without any accident. The report was sent to my father at Ranchi that his daughter was seen driving a car without a license and politely suggested my taking a license. I produced my Cuttack license and there the matter ended.

(c) Work party:—

I found Bihari ladies were far more conservative than Oriya ladies and they lagged behind in education. I made friends with many Bihari ladies and started a work party for them in my house. About 20 ladies assembled in my house once every week. I taught them knitting and they began turning out shawls, cardigans, scarves etc. We had very pleasant times together and I came to learn many things from them and gathered much experience, and we became great friends.

(d) Mixed club:—

Some of the husbands of the ladies who were members of my work party suggested that I should start a mixed club. The

notion had a fascination for me but I was in difficulty about getting a suitable room. The late Dr. Sacchidananda Sinha helped me by giving me a room on the 2nd floor of the Sinha Library, where I started this club. Ladies were made members and the husbands could only come through the tickets of their wives. Once a week, on Saturday, the Club was held. Indian Judges of the High Court, their wives, and other non-officials and I.C.S members and their wives became members of the club. Each paid a subscription of Rs. 2/- a month. I used to provide refreshments, arranged for entertainments and bridge parties. After a year or two we were in difficulty about the club room as Dr. Sinha needed it. Thus we had to close it down for the time being. However a room was given to us to start a Ladies Section in the Patna Men's Club and the wives of the members only could join this. I was allowed to join as an organiser. The Ladies Section had ups and downs, but I am told it is doing well now.

(e) Rendering help to my father :—

Some of the Oriya gentlemen working in the Secretariat and P.W.D. thought that my father being an Oriya would always help them with good post without regard to their efficiency. It was decided by Government that one of the head assistants of the P.W.D. should be taken as an Assistant Secretary, instead of an outsider. One Bengali and one Oriya Head Clerk applied for the post. The Oriya Clerk was sure of getting the post as he thought that when my father made it the mission of his life to help the Oriya people for their upliftment, he must have it. The Oriya clerk came to me and asked me to help him. I readily consented and approached my father. My father said nothing, but brought two files from the office, gave them to me to go through them carefully and then tell him what my decision was. I was surprised and felt quite proud of the confidence reposed on me. I studied the file carefully and found that the Oriya clerk was regular in attendance but very slow. The Bengali clerk though not so regular in attendance, was good at his work and could do double the amount of work

done by the other. So naturally I decided in favour of the Bengali clerk and my father said "You have done well." Many a time my father consulted me about important cases, as he knew that I mixed with all classes of people and could give him many useful information, which helped him to do justice in many cases.

(f) Sonepur Mela :—

The Sonepur Mela is a great annual festivity in Bihar. It takes place in the full moon in the month of November at Sonepur. People from all over India are gathered there. All sorts of things are found in the Mela, especially animals and birds which are brought there for sale. My father being the Minister of Health had to go on the previous day to see to the arrangements. Some of my friends, officials and non-officials, both husband and wife, wanted to see the Mela and asked me to get accommodation for them in the railway. I told my father about this and he reserved a compartment for us. Passengers stood on the footboards and on the roof and compartments were packed overfull. We were 30 in one compartment. On arrival at the Sonepur station, I was told by the Manager of the Refreshment Room, that my father had ordered lunch for us and it was ready. We did full justice to the lunch and to our surprise we found half a dozen cars waiting to take us round the Mela. We saw all the exhibits and bought a lot of useful and useless things. Then we came to the Bungalow where my father was staying and found a lovely tea and refreshments ready for us. Though very tired with the long drive in the crowd we did not forget to do full justice to the tea. It was full moon and we crossed the Ganges by steamer, arriving home at midnight fully exhausted but enjoyed ourselves greatly.

(g) Entertainments.

Being the daughter of the first Minister I had to entertain every week with tea parties, dinner parties, purdah parties and others. I fully enjoyed getting up these parties. They were a great success and quite a new thing in the station. My friends also asked me to help them with their parties and I did so readily. In these parties I was made the hostess as the

mistress of the house was orthodox and in Purdah and so she would not come out before the public.

(h) Child welfare.

Patna is known for eye trouble—specially in children. I think it was owing to the prevalence of flies and dust that children got this. When I used to walk in Lodipur I found almost all children suffering from eye trouble. Mrs. Johnson, wife of the District Magistrate lived close to our house. She and I started collecting these children and brought them to my house. She washed their eyes and put medicine and I gave them winter clothes and sweets. After a month my father was so pleased with our work that he sanctioned Rs. 30/- a month towards expenses. Later on this work was taken up by the Council of Women and this was the beginning of the Child Welfare Centre. The work expanded to such an extent that we had to open three centres and named them Lady Wheeler, Sir Ganesh and Lady Stevenson Child Welfare centres. These became very popular and useful.

(i) Prince of Wales Visit.

In the winter of 1921 Patna was quite gay and great preparations were made for the Visit of the Royal Guest—The Prince of Wales. Garden Parties, Polo, Dinner and Dance parties were arranged. As a minister's daughter I had my full share of work and enjoyment.

(j) Durbar at Govt. House.

I shall here narrate an incident from which you will find that I never take an insult lying down no matter how high the personage is who offers it. If I am treated well I do all to help, but if unjustly treated I retaliate. I know it is a failing in my nature but I cannot help it. Three Governor's wives treated me badly and I kept away from them. There was a Durbar in the Government House where I went with my father. The Minister's car arrived under the main portico which is meant for high Government officials and for ministers. My father handed me over to the Private Secretary to show me

my seat. He took me by the main marble staircase to the Balcony and I took my seat there. The Commissioner's wife came and sat by me. The ladies were all around us. The Governor's wife sat at a little distance from us, with her friends. After the function was over, as we were getting down by the same staircase, I was told by the Commissioner's wife that the Governor's wife was coming towards us. We waited for her to come and I looked at her with a smile. But she was furious, and raising her hand shouted in the presence of all the ladies " Not that way, not that way go by the back staircase." We were stupefied at the exhibition of her uncalled for temper and rudeness. For she had her private lift and we were within our rights to use this staircase. However we came down by the back staircase, as directed. As a consolation we were told that whereas the Govenor's wife had insulted us, the wives of the other high officials were insulted by her Chaprasi. I did not tell anyone about this unpleasant incident, not even to my father. But when he heard and asked me about it, I told him the facts and requested him never to ask me to attend any function at Government House. As he was a Minister, he would have to go but as his daughter was not in Government service, she could do what she liked. He told me I could do what I pleased and he would not ask me to go to the Government House.

(l) Retaliation. :—

During the visit of H.E. The Viceroy to Patna, I refused all invitations from Government House but attended other functions not connected with the Government House. Thus my friends began to pester me with questions as to why I did not attend any of the Government House functions and I had to tell them the truth. Both officials and non-officials had full sympathy with me. They had been insulted also, but had to attend because of their official position, and keep silent.

A great opportunity arrived for me to show the Governor's wife that a Minisiter's daughter could pay her back in her own

coin. The Governor's wife wanted to give the first Purdah Party and sent invitations to about 150 Indian ladies and some English ladies. The English ladies accepted but except one or two none of the Indian ladies accepted the invitation, owing to my being insulted at the Government House. The husbands' were in service, yet they had the courage not to send their wives to Government House. They were nervous for they felt that when a Minister's daughter had been insulted, their wives who were uneducated and not society women could be insulted easily by such a person. The Governor's wife could not hold a Purdah Party with English ladies only, so three days prior to the Purdah party a circular was sent round to the ladies who had accepted the invitation saying that owing to some reason the Purdah Party was postponed. I said to my friends "As long as I am here she would never be able to hold a Purdah Party." She felt this keenly and knew that though she was the highest lady in the station, yet she was thwarted by the Minister's daughter. The wife of the Chief Justice who was my friend asked me how I managed it. I asked her "Do you blame me?" She said "No, the Governor's wife deserved it." When the Governor retired from the Province no farewell party was given to his wife, as I would not take part in it and arrange for it.

(m) Purdah Party at Government House :—

One day the New Governor's wife of Bihar and Orissa—Lady Stevenson—sent for me. When I went to her she received me with outstretched hands and with a smile. Her smile was beautiful and her face showed she had a will and intellect. I immediately took a liking to her and thought it would be very pleasant task to work with her in the Bihar and Orissa Council of Women where I am the Honorary Secretary. She told me she wanted to hold a Purdah Party and asked me to help her. This I readily consented to do. She then asked the A.D.C. to show me the list of the invited people, and I found the names of the Principal Purdah ladies were not there, as their husbands were nervous about sending their wives to Government House

who were not accustomed to go out and mix in high society. Knowing the difficulties of the husbands I said "They must come and I shall bring them." I took her telephone with her permission and spoke to the husbands and told them that the ladies of their house must come to the Purdah Party. They asked "Who would look after them. You know our ladies and their drawbacks." I said "I would look after them myself." They all agreed to send their wives provided I took them to the Government House myself in purdah and brought them back again. I I agreed to do this. Lady Stevenson was delighted and said "How you order them Miss Das and none of them has refused you. It seems they know your way and like you."

The great day for the Purdah Party arrived. I worked from 3 p.m. and brought most of the ladies to Government House. My duty was to introduce each lady to the Hostess. Lady Macpherson who was receiving the ladies at the portico, came running up saying" "Maharani of Hatwa is here, but she refuses to get down unless she knows that we have prepared a special room for her reception. If not, she says she is going away." Lady Stevenson was greatly perturbed and did not know what to do. She turned to me and said "Miss Das you must help me for if she leaves my house it would be an insult to me." I told her not to worry but leave me to manage things in my own way. I then ran down with her and went straight to the Maharani's car. I opened the door of the car took her hand and said "Please let me help you to get down Maharani Saheb." She was so surprised at my daring, looked furiously and asked her son, the Maharajah, who was with her, who I was. The Maharajah replied "Our Minister's daughter.' The Maharani then condescended to descend and put all her weight on my shoulder. She asked me if a special room had been prepared. I cooly replied "Yes." Both Lady Stephenson and Lady Macpherson looked at me in surprise. I smiled and nodded at them, whispering not to interfere. As I was taking her to Lady Stevenson's Boudoir—the special room, the Maharani asked me where I come from. I promptly replied "From Jaggannathji's place." She was delighted and came up

with me. She was charmed with the Boudoir decorated with curtains and flowers and silver Nick nack and with a bright fire burning and thought it was all for her. She then went on talking with her Hostess, but declared she would not go upstairs where the other ladies were as she does not mix with Indian ladies, for they all belonged to the class to which her manager etc. belonged, whom she considered as her servants. Lady Stevenson left the room as she could not leave her other guests all the time and be here. I asked her to take the other ladies to the dining room and give them tea and get the balcony ready for the Maharani. Lady Stevenson went away saying she would do as I asked her to do. I took the Maharani to the balcony. She took a fancy to me and asked me if I would like to go to her Palace. She said "I pay my English Manager Rs. 5,000/- a month and he is my servant as all the others are paid by me. But what work do you do? Are you a servant of Government?" I told her that I did not work for money but did honorary work of all kinds with Lady Stevenson. I specially mentioned about my work in the Maternity Centre. I told her " Maharani, Sahib, you are a Maharajah's daughter, a Maharajah's wife and now you are a Maharaja's mother. You are greatly blessed by God and I am sure you would be willing to help those who are most unfortunate. She asked me what I wanted and I said "Rs. 30,000/- for the Child Welfare building." She said, she would give the money to me and I asked her to send a cheque to Lady Stevenson, which she agreed to do. Lady Stevenson was very pleased about this. I took the Maharani Saheba round the house and showed her all over the place and then put her into her car. Lady Stevenson was very pleased with the success of her party and thanked me cordially.

(n) Bihar and Orissa Council of Women :—

One day Miss Sorabji arrived at Patna from Calcutta and ladies were called to a meeting at Lady Macpherson's house. Miss Sorabji explained to us the aims and objects of the National Council of Women in India and we started a Council of Women affiliated to the N. C. W. I. The Governor's wife

became the President. Lady Macpherson and I became Joint Secretaries. An Executive Committee was formed. A meeting of the Executive Committee was held every month. All my individual work *e.g.*, Jail visiting, Child Welfare, work party, court work, municipal work were taken up by the Council as its work. Gradually Sub-Committees were formed and I became the convener of all these Sub-Committees and I gave up my Secretaryship. The President and the new Secretary went on leave to England for six months. Before they left, it was decided at our meeting to let me take up the Secretaryship again during their absence. But Lady Macpherson said that there was no use having a Secrerary, as no meetings were to be called, but only correspondence would be carried on, without any action being taken. However this was left to me to do. After their departure I found that my hands were full with letters from India Government and Bihar and Orissa Government, requiring immediate attention. I replied to these letters without giving any designation, though all letters came to me as addressed to the Secretary. I kept an office copy of all these letters. I had to write and replied to more than hundred letters in these six months. When the President Lady Stevenson returned in the winter, I sent the files of correspondence to the President remarking that though they had thought there would be no work during their absence the correspondence file would show the amount of work I had to do, even against their resolution and I sent in my resignation. She sent for me, grasped my hands and said " Why did you not write to me in England? I would have released you from your position as a clerk and made you the Secretary. Now will you take up the Secretaryship and carry on the work. The Honorary Secretary will not be back for another two months. Moreover, I want you at the Annual meeting to stand for Secretaryship. I consented to do this on three conditions (1) That the rules should be reframed and passed. (2) That there should be equal number of Indian and European ladies in the Executive Committee (3) That I should have access to her whenever I wanted her advice or help. She agreed and I framed the rules and wrote

out the annual report and sent them to her for approval. She complimented me on my work to all the English ladies and thereby created a lot of jealously and enmity. I was returned by the majority at the annual meeting as Secretary and continued to have very pleasant relation with her, and loved my work and started branches.

After this I was elected Secretary three consecutive years defeating other English ladies each time. Then I made up my mind not to stand for election again, when I had to correspond with the wives of the Commissioners who were Vice-Presidents of the local Councils, they resented my asking them to do things under instructions from the President and unpleasantness arose many a time. But the President wanted me to continue as long as she was there. I contested the seat with the wife of the European Principal of Science College. She was defeated and this caused much unpleasantness, but I went on with my work with the appreciation of the President.

(o) Raising funds for Lady Stevenson Hall:—

The ladies of our Indian Ladies Association felt that a Ladies Hall should be constructed for our various activities. We approached Government and got a beautiful plot of land. Then came the question of funds, without which it was impossible to build a Hall. We decided to get up a play and thus raise funds. I told the Committee "We must have H.E. and under his patronage we can raise a lot of money." During my absence in Calcutta the Secretary of the Working Committee had written to the Private Secretary of the H.E. and asked him if H.E. would kindly grace the function with his presence. The reply came and it said that H.E. would not be able to come. On my return the letter was shown to me and I remarked, "I would not have written and taken a refusal. Why did you write: However leave the matter to me and I shall try to repair the mischief." I went to the Government House next day and saw Lady Stevenson and told her how disappointed I was in H.E. She was surprised at my remark, looked at me with a smile and asked me "What has H.E. done now to

deserve your displeasure" I told her that I am disappointed to find that H.E. ignores us ladies by not taking any interest in our aspirations and activities. While in Calcutta I found the H.E. presiding over a function like ours, but here I find our H.E. is unwilling to help us even by coming to the function. She asked me "Do you honestly believe H.E's presence will help you in any way." I said "Yes, Rajas seeking higher titles would be glad to have the opportunity of meeting H.E. like this, and by offering them seats next to him and you we can get a lot of money from them." She said, "Very well, if you believe that H.E's presence will help you, you will have your H.E. at the show." I was delighted at the success of the mission. I took the responsibility of selling tickets for the first night. I went to a Raja who called me "Didi". He was longing to have the title of a Maharaja and he offered to give me a lac of rupees for our women's welfare work, if I could manage to get him the title of Maharaja. I asked him if he would like to have a seat next to the H.E. at our function and pay Rs. 1,000 for this seat. He said "Willingly". I next went to another who also was anxious for a title and I offered him a seat on the other side of H.E. if he payed Rs. 1,coo and he gladly agreed to give this. The front line seats were all marked atRs. 250 and were reserved for officials. No one refused to buy these high-priced tickets. The last few rows were Rs. 10/- only. All the seats were sold and I managed to raise Rs. 8000/- or so. The performance—music and dancing—were exquisite. It was got up by Mrs. A. T. Sen and was greatly appreciated. Some gold medals were given to the performers and they were entertained with their mothers by my friends for nearly a week.

We raised Rs. 13,000 in all. But found this would not be sufficient to build a Hall. I will relate in another place how Government came to our rescue in this matter.

(p) **Shari Party** :—

The Bihar and Orissa Council of Women passed a resolution to give a farewell party to our President, Lady Stevenson

on the eve of her retirement. I was the Secretary, but the reception Committee ignored me and an English lady took charge of the whole show. I did not care to exercise my right as Secretary, but thought of retaliating in another way· I went to Lady Stevenson and asked her whether she would like to be entertained by the Indian Ladies of the Council. She said that she would be delighted to accept such an invitation. Then I asked her if she would put on a "Shari" on that occasion as the Indian ladies would like to feel that she was one of them. She most readily agreed and said to me that her favourite colour was "wine". A date was fixed there and then. I met our Indian ladies with the news. They were very glad about it. We formed a reception Committee and each member paid Rs. 5. We did not want to invite any English ladies to our show but as some were in favour of this I suggested that Lady Stevenson may be asked to give us a list of those English ladies whom she would like to have at her party. She left the whole thing to us and the English ladies were left out. I thus created more enemies among them and for this I had to suffer later.

We raised quite a lot of money and Lady Stevenson was dressed in a gold tissue Benares Shari of wine colour and looked lovely. About 150 ladies joined the party. All sorts of delicacies were provided as refreshments. Group photos were taken. Theatricals were provided. Addresses in five different languages were read out by five ladies of different communities, who presented their addresses in suitable caskets. The whole show lasted from 3 p.m. to 8-30 p.m. When at the end Lady Stevenson asked me to disrobe her, I told her it was all a present from the ladies and she would make the ladies very happy by accepting them. She asked me "Even the gold trinkets?" I said "Certainly". I asked her to go back to Government House dressed as she was with a message from me to H.E. that I was sending him an Indian wife as a parting gift and to let me know how he liked her. The following day I got a letter from Lady Stevenson saying H.E. liked his Indian wife very much and thanked me for the gift.

(q) Vote of Censure:—

At the next meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council one English lady, wife of the Principal of the Science College, brought a vote of censure on me for using Council note paper in writing to the Indian members of the Council and inviting them to the "Shari" party. I met her charge by saying that each letter was signed by me with my designation as Honorary Secretary and told them that the Secretary had every right to write to the Council members on affairs connected with the Council. I felt very hurt for their meanness—they were annoyed for not being invited to the party. I wanted to resign there as I wanted to disassociate myself from such mean members though they were the wives of officials, but the majority of the members would neither accept the censure motion nor my resignation as they felt their position would be ridiculous when the public heard about it.

In my file I had two reports written by wives of two high English officials. One was the wife of a High Court Judge and the other was the wife of the Principal of the Science College. They in writing out their reports had used their husbands official paper as the water mark proved it. I took out one of these reports and showed it to the members and said I shall send these papers to the authorities concerned with the request to ask the husbands of these ladies how these papers came into their wives possession. A bomb seemed to have dropped among them. Great consternation prevailed among the ladies and the culprits were dumb-founded. I left the room with my file smiling at them all. When I was going to get into my car the Private Secretary to Lady Stevenson met me with a message from her that she was waiting for me in her room. I went to her. She caught hold of my hands and requested me not to bring such disgrace on those ladies. I said "They brought it on themselves", She said "You are right and I cannot blame you", but be magnanimous and forgive your enemies". I said I shall follow your advice". I then took out the reports and put them in the fire. She thanked me and

said "You have made me happy". I left Government House. These ladies when their husbands came in to power in the new Province of Orissa, neither forgot nor forgave my past activities in Bihar and they took their revenge on me in various ways. But they could not break down my spirit and I left the new Province of my father's creation with great sorrow and did not return to Cuttack till they had left. Afterwards each one of them was sorry for what they had done and expressed their regret before leaving the Province.

(r) Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council:—

When my father was Minister I used to go with him daily to the meetings of the Legislative Council. Whenever there was any important item, I used to take Indian ladies to the Council with me. When tired, we went to my father's Chamber for rest and refreshments. The late Dr. Sacchidananda Sinha was then the President of the Council. I liked to hear his voice in the Council when he said "Order, Order." He was the right man in the right place and I called him "uncle". He was very kind to me, and so was Sir Fakiruddin who was the Education Minister and my father's colleague. These two kind friends spoilt me in Patna as they always complied with my request whenever I approached them. When my father presented the Bihar and Orissa Muncipal Bill and held a conference of all the Chairmen and Vices Chairmen of District Board and Municipalities of the Province I used to entertain them and gave them tea every afternoon in the compound of the Council Chamber. I also discussed the Bill with them. Through my effort the women got franchise in the Municipality for the first time. Thus I got acquainted with all sections of the Municipal Bill. When I became a Municipal Commissioner of the Patna Muncipality myself this knowledge helped me a lot. Those were happy days indeed, Alas, never to come back again.

CHAPTER III

RESIGNATION OF MY FATHER FROM MINISTERSHIP

I used to attend meetings of the Municipality when my father presided. He explained the duties of the Chairman seriously and clearly and appealed to them to do their duties better and not to neglect their work in any way. I heard someone remarking behind him "The Minister will get Rs. 5,000/- a month whereas the Chairman will have to do honorary work. Is this justice? Why can't the Minister do honorary work as the Chairman: I felt the justice of this remark and repeated it to my father. He said, "They are right, my post ought to be an honorary one." He approached the Viceroy and Governor on the subject, but H.E. could not give his consent to this.

Now at the winter Council session of 1923 some members sent up resolution to reduce the Ministers salary to Rs. 4,000. The Governor would not consent to this and the Government whip was asked to find out the strength of the voters for the resolution. My father was asked by the Governor not to accept Rs. 4,000/-. Both the Ministers decided to resign if their salary was reduced to Rs. 4,000. My father was quite willing to accept an honorary post, but not a reduced salary. I went to the meeting with them. Great excitement prevailed in the Council Chamber and the members were discussing the question with geat heat. My father delivered his speech and said he would like to have the honorary post, but would not consent to the cut motion. Inspite of Sir Fakiruddins assurances that he would not accept the cut motion, when he got up to speak, he said he was willing to accept Rs. 4,000. The Council was adjourned for an hour to allow the Ministers to come to some agreed conclusion. I went with my father to his chamber and asked him to resign. He said he would do so. I told him he should first accept Rs. 4,000 to make Sir Fakiruddin's position safe and then send in his resignation. In the meantime, Sir Hugh Macpherson who was a Home Member and a Government whip met me in front of my father's room and asked me

about the decision of my father. I said he would accept Rs. 4,000 as Sir Fakiruddin was willing to do so. He was surprised. He said "Why we have the majority and we would win, so there is no question of accepting Rs. 4,000." I said "It is no use trying to persuade my father. He has decided to accept Rs. 4,000. So please phone to the Governor about it." Sir Fakiruddin did not come to my father's chamber to discuss the matter. Sir Hugh came to my father and told him that H.E. wishes to know his decision. My father said "Tell H.E. I accept Rs. 4,000." When the adjourned Council met there was no further discussion on the subject as both the Ministers had accepted the reduced salary. Then my father left the Council Chamber and went home, but I went to Sir Fakiruddin's chamber to have a straight talk with him. I was very angry with him for changing his mind like this. I could not hide my feelings, I entered his room and bitterly reproached him for this. I said my father had taken measure that he would get his Rs. 4000 and so had apparently agreed to the proposal but he would not do any more work with a man who had betrayed him and could not keep his word. He asked "Why, what is your father going to do?" I said "He must resign." He said, "No, you must not allow him to do this. We will not have his resignation." I said, "It is to be seen Sir Fakiruddin whether you or I win." After saying this I also went home. I asked by father if he was really going to resign and he said "Yes." His decision was good and I asked him to send his resignation to H.E. As his stenographer had gone home, my father himself wrote the letter of resignation and sent it to H.E. the same night. The Private Secretary of H.E. not knowing its contents and finding it was not marked "Urgent," left it on H.E's table. Early next morning my father sent for me and asked me whether I really wanted him to resign. I said "Yes" Then he said, "Finish you part of the work by phoning to all the high officials about my resignation so that H.E. will have no other alternative but to accept it" I then phoned to the Council President the then Khwaja Mahammad Noor and others and to Mr. Hallet, then the Chief Secretary.

They were all surprised at the news, but could not understand why he resigned after having accepted the reduced salary. They said they would ask H.E. not to accept the resignation, but I said it was no use for they would fail in their efforts. H.E. opened my father's letter at 9.30 a.m. and was greatly surprised. He knew nothing of his Minister's resignation nor of his daughter's activities. He phoned at once to the President of the Council as he wished to know the reason of my father's resignation. H.E. asked who had advised him to send in his resignation. They kept silent as they did not like to tell H.E. that it was his daughter who had advised him to do this. The whole town rang with this news. People were both sorry and surprised at the news. The resignation was accepted by the Governor.

After a time, he left Patna for Cuttack as he had to attend to his business which was in a very bad and serious condition then; as a result of this he had to go to the Insolvency Court and declared insolvent. And afterwards released.

After his departure from Patna I stayed on, everyone treated me as usual and I decided to stay on there and make myself useful in doing various public work. I was still called the Minister's daughter, though I did not care for that position and honour. I loved doing work and found plenty to occupy myself, as I shall narrate hereafter. I came more in contact with the people and officials than I did as a Minister's daughter.

CHAPTER IV

LEGAL ACTIVITIES

(a) First Woman Honorary Magistrate in India

It is interesting to know that though Orissa in 1924 is backward in many respects to other Provinces in India, yet in some question of women's uplift movements, she has given a lead to India.

The credit is due, I am proud to acknowledge to a woman of Orissa.

One day in 1925 I read in some newspaper about women Honorary Magistrates of Madras and Bombay. I did not know at that time that they were only Justices of Peace and had no actual power to try any case. I said to myself " why should not our Province have an Honorary Magistrate ?" To think was to act. I at once saw late Dr. Sachhidananda Sinha—the then Finance and Judicial Member of the Executive Council of the Government of Bihar and Orissa in connection with the question of Honorary Magistrate. He asked me, " Do you wish to be an Honorary Magistrate, if so, I can make you a real one ?" I said, " Certainly, I would like to be the first honorary woman Magistrate in India "—I was appointed in 1925. I ranked in equal status with the stipendiary Magistrates in Patna. I first had third class power and after six months of my appointment I enjoyed the power of a second class Magistrate—and tried all cases which are triable by a second class Magistrate. I refused to sit with any man stipendiary Magistrate from the beginning to learn work, so I sat singly. I had a court room furnished, a retiring and a bathrooms. A clock was put up on the wall of my room. I had a Bench-clerk and a chaprasi. Some months I worked 22 days for four hours a day, when second class Magistrates were on leave. In one year I tried 575 cases dealt with Indian Penal Code and District Board, Municipality, Railway, Motor Vehicle, Police and other By-law cases. 50% of my judgments were upheld in the Patna High Court and 25% of my judgments were modified and 25% in I.P.C. cases were set aside. I worked like a stipendiary Magistrate, to show to Government that a woman was also capable of doing executive services just as well as a man. Even when I had 3rd class power, I tried the cases of juvenile offenders by the order of the District Magistrate, that was the privilege I enjoyed from the very beginning of my appointment.

The first day when I took my seat in the Court, I felt quite an important person seeing that lawyers were in my court. I did not feel nervous or show my ignorance in law. I was determined to learn from them in trying By-law cases. I found that poor people were often prosecuted, whereas the

gentry escaped from being punished. I asked the prosecuting officer one day, "How is it that poor men are always prosecuted ? Do not the rich commit the same offence ? If they do, then why are they not prosecuted for breaking laws, are they exempted ?" He said, " No your honour, if you give me the orders, I shall have them prosecuted." I told him that he should do his duty irrespective of persons.

(b) Chief Justice fined

One day I went to the house of the then Chief Justice. The wife of the Chief Justice told me that the police was becoming a nuisance and did a most daring thing in stopping the car of the Chief Justice in front of the Kotwali police. She asked me in an aggrieved voice, " Have you ever heard of such an incident anywhere ?" I laughed and asked her, "What was wrong with the car ?" She said, " There was nothing wrong seriously, only one of the lights was bad." I asked her, " Why are you finding fault with the police ? It has only done its duty." She asked, " Did you give the orders ?" I replied, " Not exactly to stop the Chief Justice's car, but all cars, which break the rule of the Motor Vehicles Act." She laughed very much amused and said, " You wicked person, you wish to punish the Chief Justice ? " In reply I said, " I will consider it an honour to punish him—for it is a privilege which no one will ever have." She asked, " Is the Chief to stand in the box of the accused in your court ?" I laughed and said, " Oh, no, but if he does, it will enhance the importance of my Court—it is not necessary for him to appear in my Court. Send your driver and it will be all right." The next thing she asked me, " Will you fine him " ? I said " Yes, if he admits his fault. He will be fined the maximum as being the Chief Justice he should know the Law." Just at this time the Chief Justice came in and said to me, "I am glad that you have plenty of courage and you will do much good in the town," and paid me a great compliment.

(c) Censure of District Board Chairman

I shall narrate a few more incidents of my activities for you my readers to see that during my Honorary Magistrateship

though I punished my friends, officials and non-officials yet none of them ever showed any displeasure. On the contrary, I was appreciated by them and they encouraged me to do my duty on my various activities wherever Government was pleased to appoint me. During my court life I found poor people really harassed by the rich and they suffer most. Here I shall give you an example. A very poor man was prosecuted by the Chairman of the District Board for occupying District Board land—the accused was so poor that he could not engage even a Muktear to take up his case. I took pity on him and made a local investigation and by referring to old maps and other documents and making old people of the locality as Court witnesses, I found that the rich man's claim which was supported by the Chairman was false. As the case was instituted by the District Board, I ordered that the compensation of Rs. 60 should be paid to the accused by the Chairman of the District Board and made the Chairman responsible for compensation, in order that in future better care may be taken and a proper examination of the evidence available in a case should be examined by the Chairman before he sanctions prosecution. This case created a great sensation. The District Board went up to the High Court—but lost the case—I was overjoyed when I came to learn about it.

(d) Minister of L.S.G. obstructing public road and its consequences

One morning I was walking in the new Dak Bungalow Road in Patna and found the whole of the road was blocked with bricks and mortars. A big house of the Honourable Minister of Local Self-Government was being built. I phoned to the S.I. of Police. On his arrival I asked him, "Why have you not prosecuted the man who has blocked the Dak Bungalow Road? You are always ready to prosecute hawkers for leaving baskets by the roadside but here the whole of the public road has been blocked and no action has been taken—why?" He said, "Your honour, it is the Honourable Minister, who is building the house and I dare not prosecute him as I will be in trouble."

I understood the man's position, pitied him and took the law into my own hand, and passed an order that the road should be cleared up within six hours failing which the Minister must show cause why he, the Honourable Minister, should not be prosecuted under the Police Act for obstructing the public road. I gave him this order with an instruction to show it to the District Magistrate and if it was in order to serve it on the Honourable Minister of Local Self-Government putting the seal of my Court. The District Magistrate saw my order and asked the S.I. to serve it. The Honourable Minister was on tour, so the order was served on his son who is an advocate of the Patna High Court. He was very angry with me but he had to obey the order of the Court and had the road in perfect order by the evening. A few days after this incident I went to see the Honourable Minister, in connection with some affair of the Municipality. I found him surrounded by half a dozen influential city men. He was pleased to see me and asked me to sit on the sofa near him and put his hand on my shoulder and asked the people, "Do you know who she is ?" They said, " She is the daughter of our ex-Minister Mr. M.S. Das." The Minister said, " She is greater than your minister's daughter, she has so much courage and pluck in her that no man in my province has got." He repeated a Persian couplet, he said, " We have many crows in our province, they make noise and soar up very little in the sky ; but she is an eagle, she goes up higher and higher in the sky. Do you know what she has done ? She served on me an order for my prosecution." They were all amazed at my daring. I thanked him for the compliment and said, " I appreciate your remark and as you have put me into high places I must do credit to your choice by doing my duties however unpleasant they might be." He said, he appreciated my work and asked me to go on as I had started and I would not regret it. I liked the man. He was a rough diamond and good at heart. I fought many a battle and he always gave into me and I always found it was a pleasure to defeat him. My friends thought that my career was finished after this incident but nothing of the kind. I was nominated time after time not only as a Municipal Commissioner, but Jail Visitor, member of the Governing Body

of the Prince of Wales Medical College, by the same Honourable Minister,—but whenever he found an opportunity he appointed me on various committees. But what about our present Ministers? The power which is given to them is abused and some even take revenge. The good old days are no more. What a pity?

(e) Governor's cook fined

Here is an amusing incident. I am sure that you would all be amused and laugh at it. It is about the Governor's cook. Patna Police were very different from the Cuttack Police. Though I was only an Honorary Magistrate, yet the Police were very much afraid of me as they knew that both the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police were greatly interested in my activities—so my order was a law to the police. They, irrespective of persons and their position started prosecuting everyone, who happened to break laws. The Governor's cook was caught. One morning the Private Secretary to H.E. rang me up saying " H.E's cook has been prosecuted by the Police and his case is in your court, but H.E. will be leaving for tour this very night and I hope you will not detain him after today, otherwise we shall have no cook." I asked what offence he has committed and whether he is going to confess his guilt. If so, certainly he will be released. He said, " The cook was coming to the Government House without a light on his cycle and he has confessed his guilt." I said, " I am glad to know it, if he does the same in the court, I will only fine him and he can go with H.E." He asked me, "What will be the amount of his fine?" I said, " The maximum fine of Rs. 10 for H.E.'s cook to give a lesson to others." He heartily laughed and said, "Very good, I shall send the money." I was obliged to pester my friends for doing my duties. The officials as well as non-officials both co-operated with me and assumed a sporting spirit when punished, and thus my task became a pleasure.

(f) Keeping time and order

The Police prosecuting officers were always ready to carry out my orders—one day I called a Police case and was told

that the prosecuting officer had not come. The case was fixed up for 11.30 a.m. The Bench-clerk told me that the Police officer does not come to court before 1 p.m. as the Deputy Magistrates always arrive after 12 o'clock. Well, I took up other cases and waited—I could have dismissed the Police case and the prosecuting officer would have been in trouble, but I gave him a chance. He arrived at half past one o'clock. I asked him to look at the clock and tell me the time. He looked up and said, "It is 1-30 p.m." I asked him "Did you read my order-sheet?" He said, "Yes." I asked him, "What was the time given there?" He said, "It was 11-30 a.m." I asked him, "Why did you not attend in time?" He asked me to excuse him and he would not be late again. Since then the Deputy Magistrates also started coming at 11 a.m. and the District Magistrate told me that my presence had brought a good change in the court.

(g) S.P. comes as a witness

I shall narrate here another case in which the S.P. came as a witness to my court. It shows how little attention the higher authorities pay to the work in which they themselves are interested. They generally leave it to their subordinates who sometime make ridiculous mistakes. In this case it will be seen that had the S.P. looked into the charges framed against a driver he would not have put himself into a ridiculous position.

One day, I was trying a case. The prosecuting Police officer came and whispered to my clerk that the S.P. was waiting outside to give evidence in the case and I was asked to take up the case immediately. I told him that the case would be taken up after a quarter of an hour and asked him to wait in his chamber until called for. My Bench-clerk went after I finished the case and brought a chair and placed it in my "ejlash" where I was sitting. I asked him why he had brought the chair; he told me it was for the S.P. I asked him to take away the chair as the S.P. was not a visitor, but a witness and would have to stand in the witness box. The S.P. entered my room, hat in hand bowed and said "Good morning." I returned his salutation and showed him the witness box. I took down the

necessary formalities and asked him to narrate his case. He said that on a certain day in May he was riding in the morning and found a motor car coming very fast from Dinapore side. He stopped the car and wanted to see the number plate which was indistinct. A charge was framed on that ground. I asked the accused to cross-examine by his Muktear but he was very poor and asked me to do justice in his case. Many a time I did this to help the poor as they could not afford the Muktear's fees.

I put the question from the Bench to the witness—

(a) "Did you tell the driver that the number plate was indistinct ?"
Witness—"Yes, I did"

(b) "What did the driver do ?"
Witness—"He got down from the car and wiped the number plate and showed it to me."

(c). "Did you then see the number distinctly and do you remember it ?"
Witness—"Yes."

I showed him a number plate and asked him if that was the same number plate.

He said, "Yes."

Then I told him that the number was not indistinct but only covered with dust. The driver was coming a long way at a high speed and the road being dusty, the number plate was covered with dust. So where was the offence. The Motor Vehicles Act does not say that a driver should get out of his car every 4 or 5 minutes to inspect whether his number plate is covered with dust or mud. The accused was therefore not guilty of the charge framed against him and I discharged him.

The witness left the court looking small. The prosecuting officer thought the presence of the S.P. in court would help him to get the culprit punished but he saw his mistake.

(h) Tampering with my Court file by a Police officer

I was trying a theft case—a man for having stolen rice. I let him go on bail as there was no previous conviction against him, but the prosecuting officer asked me to send him to the hajat. On the next day of hearing, he filed a petition saying that the man released on bail that very night had stolen some potatoes. So I was obliged to cancel the bail and send the accused to the hajat. The Police officer however could not substantiate his charge and lost the case. A few days after, my Bench-clerk told me that the file about the theft case had come back from the District Magistrate with certain remarks. I looked at the file and found that I was asked to explain why I had not sent the accused to the hajat when the petition was filed by the Police offices in the first time. I was surprised to read this remark as no petition was placed before me the first day not to allow bail. I looked into my file and to my surprise I found a petition by the Police officer, which was not dated and signed by me, and there was no mention about it in the record sheet. I knew at once that the Police officer, having failed to get the accused sent to jail, put a petition after I had delivered judgment. He gave the file to the District Magistrate. I felt very angry and wanted to teach a lesson to the Police officer. So I wrote out an official explanation and asked the District Magistrate to enquire how the petition came to my file, after the case went out of my court. I took the file and my explanation to the District Magistrate. He knew that the Police officer had put the petition in my file—after having read my judgment—in order to discredit my work. He did not therefore take my official explanation as that would mean great punishment to the Police officer, but told me that I would not be troubled again like this. I do not know what happened after this incident, but the Police came to their senses. They realised that I was quite different from the other Magistrates and I would not deliver judgment in Police cases after consulting them. I was a person to be feared and obeyed. Thus as long as I was a Magistrate, the poor people were protected from the Police,

(i) Interview with H. E. for first class power

There are many interesting events of my court life. If I start narrating them, they will become a book. I took special interest in writing out my judgments as I did not want that they should be set aside. So I had a better record of my court work than many stipendiary Magistrates. I wanted first class power, having enjoyed second class power for nine years. The S.D.O. and the District Magistrate were in favour of my having first class power as they told me that I would be able to do many of their works. So here is another interesting story. One day I went to have an interview with H. E. Sir Hugh Stevenson. I took a statement of all my court works and placed them before H. E. and requested him to confer first class power on me. He looked at my records and paid me compliments and said, " The policy of Government now is not to give first class power to Honorary Magistrate. Your services would be recognised in a most appropriate way but I am sorry I cannot give you first class power." I said, "The policy of Government is daily changing and your Excellency has the power to change it. I am not anxious for the recognition of my services by getting a gold medal but am most anxious to show it to your Excellency that a woman can do work like a man. May I with your Excellency's permission ask the District Magistrate to recommend me to you for first class power ?" He kept quiet—there was silence in the room for a minute or two. At last I broke the silence by saying to H. E. "May I take your silence as consent". He laughed and said, " It is very difficult to say 'No' to you. You may ask the Magistrate to recommend you and I shall consider your case." I thanked him very nicely and felt quite happy to gain my object. But see my difficulty, when I approached the Magistrate and told him about the interview, he asked me to wait as the Commissioner would not like to see a woman getting first class power but to wait till he leaves the station. So ended my 9 years' Honorary Magistrateship in Patna and I was busy in other things and took interest in election affair. I resigned my Honorary Magistrateship. In my experience as a Magistrate I

feel women can make themselves useful here and do much to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. They can give better attention and exercise more patience, in their efforts to find out truth during a judicial enquiry. I helped many "purda nashin" ladies who appeared before me and were reluctant to appear before a Magistrate of the other sex where a Magistrate is required to certify to the genuineness of a signature made in the Magistrate's presence by the "purda nashin" ladies in cases of transfer of Government securities and other transactions by them.

In 1927, three years after my appointment as an Honorary Magistrate, Bombay and Madras appointed women Magistrates. Their sphere of work lies mainly in children's courts. Women Magistrates singly were not empowered to deal with offenders; whereas in Patna which was the only town in India a woman Magistrate of Orissa was empowered to deal with offenders and sit singly.

In Bombay also women Magistrates sit for two hours a day once or twice a week and are authorised to see documents of the witnesses and sign papers. The position of a woman Magistrate is more like that of an assessor, whose opinion the trying Magistrate was not bound to accept in the case of a difference of opinion.

In Calcutta similar honour was conferred on some women but they were not empowered to do the real work of a trying Magistrate.

In England the first woman Magistrate was appointed in 1920. Burma appointed its first woman Magistrate in 1929. But nowhere women had the privilege of trying I.P.C. cases singly, except in Patna and such privileges were enjoyed by me.

(j) Court of Wards case

I am always mistaken as a lawyer, why I do not know. I never had legal training but perhaps, as I love to talk much and talk reasonably and also perhaps it is due to my court work as an Honorary Magistrate, which has given me a

strong commonsense and widened my experience which often makes me feel that I could give opinion on any subject. Personally I feel that it was due to my training in Mr. M.S. Das' house, which has equipped me in different spheres of life. Gentle reader will you be surprised to learn that I was engaged on behalf of the Rani of Deora to appear before the Court of Wards of the U. P. Government. How and why it happened I will narrate here.

One day the Manager of the Punchcote Raja (Manbhum District) came to see me at Patna with a letter from the Raja requesting me to come to his estate and take up his daughter's maintenance case and appear before the U.P. Court of Wards and asked me for my fees. I was amused when I read the letter, for never before then had I earned any money by doing any professional work and here I had been offered a fee to undertake a work for which I had never been trained. I asked the Manager "why did not the Raja engage Miss Sorabjee." The Manager said "Miss Sorabjee does not take so much interest in a Rani's case but she is always in favour of Government, consequently the Ranis suffer. Raja wants a fighter and you have been recommended by two or three friends to be a most suitable person to take up this case." However I went with the manager to Punchcote Raj. The Raja had a beautiful marble palace. He had fitted it up with up-to-date modern contrivances and for comforts and pleasure things were brought from Paris exhibition and furnished his house. I was given a lovely suite of rooms. When I had a rest the Raja's two sons and four Managers came and told me all about the case. I did not pass any opinion but said after going through the necessary papers, if I felt competent to undertake the case, I would do so and then let them know about my fee. For it is my first case and I must win it. During the day I went through many files and studied the case. I thoroughly understood it. It required a person to place the whole matter properly before the Court of Wards. When we met again the next day I agreed to take it up but I demanded three thousand rupees for my services which would

be for a fortnight. As I would have to coach the Rani Sahiba and prepare a representation to be given to the Court of Wards officer and appear with the Rani Shiba before the senior officers of the Court of Wards in Benares. The Raja agreed to pay and gave me a cheque for Rs. 1000 as first instalment towards my fees. After preparing my case I came to Cuttack to consult my father on some legal points. He encouraged me by saying it was a good case and said "you are sure to win" and paid me a compliment by saying "I wish I had a junior to prepare a case as you have done it and to work with me." I felt very proud to hear this and asked my father whether any lawyer earned so much in his first brief as I did and yet I was not a lawyer. In the appointed time we went to Benares with the Raja Sahib, his two sons, Rani Sahibm her daughter, Managers and others. I appeared before the senior officer and won my points for the Rani Sahib and she got all her money for her maintenance with retrospective effect and thus ended my first real work work as a lawyer. I had also been with her to Nainital and stayed 3 months with her and also I had to work for her for which I was separately paid altogether. This case brought me Rs. 10,000 in one and half years and I felt proud of my earnings. If I tell you all about this case and my life at Nainital it will be a very big volume. So I put a stop here.

(k) Election petition case :—

This was a case in which I was personally interested as I filed an election petition to set aside the election of my friend Sayed Mohammad Hafiz M.A., B.L. He and I both contested the University seat at the Legislative Council at Patna I had great excitment contesting this election and enjoyed it thoroughly. I found amongst the Biharis there was no question of creed, caste and nationality or sex. Neither do they suffer from inferiority complex. The voters gave me every encouragement to stand for the election. Even three Mohammadan voters who were friends of Mr. Hafiz gave me their votes, it was unique but such was my position in Patna that everyone

was kind to me and encouraged me to do more work. At the time of counting of the votes I found I was defeated by one vote. I was staggered, as I knew I would get more votes than my rival. Ten or twelve of my votes were not counted as they did not comply with the election rule. I found that 3 of my voting papers which I personally registered were not amongst the voting papers, they did not arrive from the post. It was the mistake of the returning officer which made me lose those three votes. I studied the law book and found that I had good ground for filing a patition. I went to a senior lawyer and also to Mr. P. R. Das, Barrister, and consulted them. Every one thought I had a good case. I deposited Rs. 1,000 and filed an election petition to set aside the election. I came to Cuttack and discussed with my father about my case. He asked me not to file the election case as I might have further disappointment. But I am a person who when once makes up her mind and thinks she is in the right nothing could make her give it up. I did not follow my father's advice. The great day dawned. A special Tribunal was appointed to try my case. I had five lawyers for my case but none of them would accept money from me as it was the first election petition filed by a woman in India. And it was not a dirty case. I also studied my own case and instructed my lawyers. I went with them to the court daily for four days and sat with them. After 4 days long trial when the 3 missing voting papers were opened, it was found they were good votes for me. The election was set aside. I was not elected but a fresh election was ordered. I was not disappointed or discouraged. But decided to try my luck again, as I was sure of my voters. None of then deceived me. That was, a great encouragement for me. I won my election petition case and had congratulations from officials and non-officials and got back my deposit money.

(I) Insolvency Case :—

Everyone knows in Orissa that my father for more than a quarter of a century worked single-handed for the regeneration of Orissa and tried to improve the industries. He took up so many things in hand for which money was required and also he

had to earn his living. Even a millionnaire could not cope with the adverse circumstances of the time when he lived and the result was a big crash. Everything was sold, house, law books, furniture, Tannery, art wares everything he possessed went to the court. Now here I come into this Insolvency picture. One of his creditors filed a petition that the property which I possessed belonged to Mr. Das as I never earned anything in my life. It was a fact that I earned nothing except Rs. 20,000 from Insurance money and Rs. 10,000 as my legal fees. The problem before me was how to prove that all my properties were my own and nothing belonged to my father. I acquired my property by the saving of my pocket money. Is it not wonderful ? But I always had generous pocket money and by investing and re-investing it, I increased the amount I made all my transactions always through the Bank. I was always in the habit of keeping accounts. My account books of 45 years I had still with me and as all my business were transacted through the Bank I was saved from ruin. I went to the Chief Justic in Patna and asked his advice as to what I was required to do. He told me I must prove how I acquired the properties by giving certified copies and give documentary evidence in the court. Could I do so ? I was relieved. I smiled and told him. "Yes, I think I can prove it." After that for one whole month I worked for more than 10 hours a day with my old account books and got certified copies from the various Banks, Life Insurance Company and wrote down questions and answers for each of my property to prove how I got them. After a month I was pleased with my own work for I felt I was saved from ruination. I went to the late Mr. Hasan Iman, the great lawyer of Bihar and consulted him is my case, showed him all my papers and how I prepared them. He gave me 3 full hours to go through the whole case, did not charge me any fees as he was interested in my case and he promised to take up my case should it come to the High Court and asked me not to worry. He said "no court could disbelieve you." He informed the creditors' lawyer to come and examine my papers and see whether he had any right over my property. After going through

the case the creditor found out that he had not an inch of claim to fight the case as it was all my money through which the property was acquired and he withdrew the case. It was a great victory for me.

(m) Amendment to Legal Practitioner's Act:—

When Miss Hazra my late sister passed her law, she tried to get permission to practice. The Patna High Court did not give permission to Miss S. B. Hazra to be enrolled as a lawyer. Without the amendment of the Act, it was not possible for any woman in India to practice in a Court of Law.

The late Mr. M. S. Das wrote to Sir H. S. Gour to take up the question of the amendment of the Legal Practitioner's Act in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi with the removal of sex disqualification resolution. He at once asked Mr. Das to send me and Miss Hazra to Delhi with the necessary papers. He sent up the amendment to the Legal Practitioners Act which he wished to move with his resolution on the removal of sex disqualification in the Legislative Assembly. We went to Delhi on 19th February 1922. Sir H. S. Gour on the following day took us to the Assembly and asked me to help him to get his amendment allowed to be moved. I did not know how I could be useful to him. We went to the President's room. Sir Frederic Whyte was the President I was introduced to him. He enquired after my father's health and then told Dr. Gour that he had disallowed Dr. Gour's amendment. I then at once asked Sir Frederic not to be so strict and hard but to allow the amendment to be moved. He asked me " How does it interest you." I said " It interested me so much that I travelled all the way from Patna to Delhi last night for the amendment " and then I told him all about the decision of the Patna High Court. He said "The amendment is quite irregular and even if he allows it, which is quite impossible the members of the Assembly will raise objection. I said " If you once do an irregular thing for the cause of woman, it will not hurt any one but give satisfaction to Indian women and you yourself will feel pleasure, so why not try to be irregular for once only. As regards the Assembly members if they raise objection you with the privilege

of the Chair can make them sit down by saying " Order, order. He said "What about the Home Member." I said " I will see him too, but please do not disappoint me." He was most reluctant—but I pressed him hard—at last he said, that he would do his best for me. I said " Please do allow Dr. Gour to move his amendment." The Assembly bell was ringing Members were one after the other going to their seats. I did not know them but when I asked them not to raise objection on Dr. Gour's amendment, most of them promised to help me. I saw the then Home Member, Sir William Vincent. After wishing me good morning, he told Dr. Gour that the amendment was out of order. I asked Sir William to help us. He said "I being Home Member, I cannot sit silent over it, I must raise an objection." I said "Please help Dr. Gour to move his amendment and if you are to say anything against it, please say that Government will consider it if Dr. Gour will withdraw the amendment." He promised to help me—we went and I sat in the distinguished visitors gallery.

Newspapers readers of 1922 who had followed the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly must have wondered why Dr. H. S. Gour raised the question of the amendment of the Legal Practitioners Act in a resolution on the removal of sex disqualification and how Sir Federic Whyte, that most strict of Presidents of the Assembly allowed such an irregularity to pass even when some objected to that amendment. The then Home Member after a mild protest promised that the Government would consider the amendment if Dr. Gour will withdraw the amendment, which Dr. Gour did. I felt proud of my achievement and every one wondered at this incident in the Assembly. Not satisfied with this I saw the Home Member next day and requested him to bring a Bill for the amendment of the Legal Practitioners Act. He was very much amused, saying " Do you know what happened last night." I said "Nothing serious I believe." He laughed and said "It was serious to the President and me. We were dinning with H.E. the Viceroy, and he wished to know what happened to both of us that we allowed

such an irregular amendment to come up before the Assembly. Now we could not very well say that we were influenced by a woman, we kept silent, so I am not going to be influenced any more by you." Anyone would have left his office after this, but I was not prepared to have his refusal, I said, "Only a year more and you will leave India and I am sure when you will think of your days in India if you do what I am asking you to do, you will feel a great satisfaction. That you have done something for the women of India. So will you not change your mind and help us?" He asked " Why not ask Dr. Gour to take up the Bill?" I said "It will not be so effective as it will be if it comes from the Home Member." At last he promised to do so and I thanked him, and before I left Delhi I saw all the members and canvassed for the Bill. When the Bill was introduced it met with no opposition from the House. Sir Willam had then retired. The new Home Member remarked at the time that, he wished all other Government Bills had such an easy passage as that Bill, which was made into Law in half an hour's time without a single dissenting voice. It was a great victory. Miss Hazra was the first lady to practise in Courts of Law at Patna High Court and she thus earned this unique distinction.

CHAPTER V

UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES :—

(a) How I came to be a Fellow of the Senate :—

In 1927 one day in my presence, late Sir Jowala Prasad, the Judge of the Patna High Court and late Sir Ali Imam, the great lawyer of Bihar took Sir Fakiruddin, Education Minister, to task for having them nominated to the Senate saying that they were too busy in their own profession and had no time to give to the Senate. So it was no use nominating them. It would be better to nominate such people as would do some real work. Late Sir Fakiruddin asked whom they would recommend. Sir Ali said " Have Miss Das in my place, I am resigning". Sir Fakiruddin said he would recommend me to

the Chancellor of the University as there was a vacancy and they need not resign. He did so, and my name was approved and so in 1927 I was nominated by Sir Hugh Stephenson, the then H.E. the Chancellor of the Patna University to the Senate of the University. In the Senate I represented the Faculty of Arts and also the Faculty of Education.

(b) Creation of Music Board:—

Soon after my nomination I sent a resolution to the Senate to create a Board for music with seven names. I personally know nothing about the music. I was asked by some Fellows who failed to do so each year, but I felt also the necessity of having it in the University curriculum for our women students. At the Annual Meeting of the Senate when the Vice-Chancellor brought up my resolution the Fellows of the Senate wished to know before giving permission the qualification of the members who will be on the Board, so all the members whose names I recommended on the Board of studies one after the other stood up and said " I beg to withdraw my name." This did not crush me though I felt uneasy. The Vice-Chancellor then asked me whether I would withdraw my resolution. I said "No." I persisted to create a Board with the remaining three names including myself—none of us know music and the fact was known to the members—so a Fellow asked that I should give a demonstration in music before the Senate so that they would know whether the mover has the requisite qualifications before the permission was granted. The Vice-Chancellor asked me whether I would do so. Nothing daunted, I got up and said " Sir, the Fellows are certainly justified in asking me to give a demonstration but let me have Bina, Sitar, Esraj and other stringed instruments of which I am expert." The Fellows all clapped their hands and unanimously gave permission to create a Board of Music. So this was how I created a Board of Music. After having the Board formed, I wished to resign from it, but you my readers will be surprised that I was not allowed but made the President of the Board so long as the syllabus in diploma was not made and thus I was on the Board for 3 years.

I also introduced the Board of Domestic Science. At every annual Senate meeting I brought up a resolution which was carried.

(c) Election to Syndicate :—

Great enthusiasm prevailed in Patna in 1927 when I contested the permanent Orissa seat in the Syndicate by an election. The Senate members were to vote. I was then newly nominated as a Fellow of the Senate. I had three veteran rivals. Amongst them two were educationists of the Ravenshaw College. One of them was late Mr. S. C. Tripathy, I.E.S., who was afterwards the D.P.I. of Orissa. What chance could I have to aspire for a seat and to contest it with men whose educational qualifications were of such superior order as to make one the D.P.I. of the new province of Orissa. But alas their qualifications were of no value to the voters of the Senate. They wanted solid work. Was it not most daring on my part to contest the seat ? Wait and see the result. My name was proposed by the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court and several other influential men of Patna University. The great day dawned for the election. I was full of hopes. The telephone bell rang in the morning in my office room. I took up the receiver and hallowed "Sir Ali speaking." I said " Yes, Sir Alli any news ? Sir Ali said " I am sorry to give you bad news ; I and some of my colleagues will not be able to come to the Senate meeting today and vote for you as the Chief Justice's Court is opened and we have a most important case at 10 a.m. in his court." I said " Cannot the case be postponed ? Sir Ali said "No" Then laughingly I said "The court must be then closed". Sir Ali said "How ?" I said "Please telll the Chief Justice to close the High Court for two hours" He said "It is impossible, one can ask him." A few minutes after again the telephone bell rang and the Advocate General expressed regret for his inability to attend the meeting for the same reason as Sir Ali's. He also told me that the court cannot be closed. I consulted my voters list and found that I would lose 15 votes from the High

Court, but I was not prepared to lose a single vote in such an interesting contest with two Oriya educationists and a landlord. I never had a defeat on any undertaking where I had set my heart to win it. I was determined to win the election. I phoned to Lady Millor, the wife of the Chief Justice and told her my plight that owing to the High Court being opened I was fearing defeat and asked her to approach the Chief to close the court. She expressed great regret for the unfortunate circumstances and said " Nobody can help you here as nobody dare approach the Chief on the subject". So in despair I did a most daring thing. I wrote a letter to the Chief and requested him to close the court for two hours and to come kindly to the Senate meeting to help his nominee to defeat her rivals. No reply came. I waited and waited with a palpitating heart but no reply from the Chief came to me. At last with a heavy heart I went to the Senate and prepared to take defeat with a smiling face. In fact I thought of a nice congratulatory speech for my victorious rival. But to the miracle a few minutes before the Senate meeting I saw the car of the Advocate General, Sir Ali and other High Court Judges and lawyers entering the University gate. Sir Sultan, the Advocate General came to me with a serious face and asked me "What have you written to the Chief I said " How do you know that I have written ?" Sir Sultan said that there is no one in the province who could write a letter to the Chief and ask him to close the Court. I asked why ? Is the Chief displeased with me ? Sir Sultan " Oh, no, the Chief is very much amused and admired your pluck. Do you know a little before 10 o'clock he sent for me in his chamber and said " Sultan, I have an order to close the Court from a higher authority from 10 to 12 a.m. So the Court is closed and tell the other Judges to close the Court and go to the Senate to vote." There was great excitment in the High Court as well as in the town for closing of the High Court for me. All waited with excitement for the result of the election. When the Vice-Chancellor announced that I had got an over-whelming majority and was elected by 80 votes and my rivals the Ex-D.P.I. got 10 to

12 and the others less—great jubilation was in the Senate. The Chief with other officials and non-officials conducted themselves like college boys, shouted, thumped on the desk, making noise with their legs, congratulating me and shouting out my name. So that was my big success in the educational world. I justified my election by my work in the Syndicate which will be narrated hereafter. One of my rivals protested against my election saying I had no claim to the Orissa seat as I was not Mr. Das's own daughter. The Vice-Chancelor said that he was satisfied with my claim. But Oriya people were not satisfied. In the Press, they protested and made a representation to H.E. the Chancellor against my claim to the seat. I was asked by the Government to show my claims which I did and Chancellor was satisfied. I feel I owe a duty to my Biharee friends to mention here that the gentlemen in the Senate of the Patna University realised the importance of co-operation with women in matters relating to Education and appreciated services rendered by a woman's cause generally. It was for this reason that they were kind enough to give me an absolute majority of votes in my election to the Syndicate against the two Oriya Educationalists.

(d) Viceroy's visit.

In 1928 Government appointed me on the Secondary Board of Education. I was again elected by the Board as a member on the University delegation and also I was a member of the Text Book Committee. Wherever I was placed, I tried to make my presence felt and also I was never a silent member on any committee.

When H. E. the Viceroy opened the Science College in November 1927 at Patna, Members of the Syndicate of the Patna University were introduced to him. H. E. was then pleased to remark saying of me "This Province has the proudest distinction of having a lady on the Syndicate." I do not appropriate the honour to myself, but I feel proud that I have been the means of earning a proud distinction for the women of my Province. Miss S. B. Hazra was my predecessor in office

in the Syndicate. Now my readers, I shall tell you all about my work in the Syndicate. The Orissa seat in the Syndicate fell vacant, when Miss Hazra's term was over she did not seek for re-election so I stood for it and enjoyed the contest and won.

(e) Female v Woman

This was a controversial point and I brought forward the resolution about it to the Syndicate. I was determined to have my resolution passed and the Syndicate would not give me leave to move my resolution on behalf of it and they challenged me to get it passed by the Senate. I took up the challenge and my maiden speech was extempore as follows "Sir I beg to move that the Senate recommend to Government that changes be made in the University regulations so that wherever the word "Female," appears, it should be substituted by the word "Woman." At the last annual Senate meeting I wanted to move my resolution, but for want of time I was told by our learned Vice-Chancellor to remain "Female" till today. Therefore I approach this intellectual body in the hope of gaining for my sex what has been too long withheld."

"The noun use of "Female" it will be admitted by all, is unfortunate and is reasonably resented. Even Fowler under whose banner the experts want to take shelter says, to call a woman a female is exactly as impolite as to call a "lady" a "woman." It is only an Indian Railway that persists in this use and only an Indian Government that tolerate it. Unfortunately the Indian University, even this which is the best and which justly boasts of experts and linguists, wink at such practice and thus fail in their duty of correcting a popular mistake and enhancing and strengthening our idea of self-respect.

Our guardians of language say that to turn "Woman" into an adjective with "Female" ready made is mere perversity. The word "Female" no doubt is convenient in the realm of science. In Biological, Zoological or medical books it helps us

to differentiate between the two sexes. This word "Female" is a relic of ancient time when man enforced the subordinate position on woman denying to her the right to possess property or to compete with man in various activities of life. But in these enlightened times, when woman is proving herself equal to man in intellect and understanding, adventure and sport, the word "Female" which admittedly has a tinge of contempt in it, should not be applied to women. Jealousy however is a prominent feature to preserve the antiquated connotation notwithstanding the cobweb and dust which time has spread over it. They consider themselves the guardian angels of the word and consider it their duty to protect the word against any change in its connotation. Those are the gentlemen, Sir, who can never lead, they can only follow. But Sir, I am mistaken, they cannot even follow intelligently. The wise Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London realising that words are made by man and not man for words and accepting new ways and new ideas, have discarded the ancient connotation of "Female" and adopted that which is happy and healthy for him that uses at least as much as for her who is described. Can we in India pretend to know more of English than they do at the English Universities? Is it not ridiculous to beard the lion in his own den? Who, Sir will dare to defy the doctors that don't agree? We find in the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford and London the word "Female" giving place to the word "Woman." They talk of women students and no longer female students. I have with me the authorities which will satisfy any one who dares to challenge my statements. To perpetuate in Patna what is blasphemous in Britain is pathetically brutal.

I should remind my critics of the grammarian who rebuked Ceaser with the word "You can bestow Roman Citizenship on man, but you cannot control the changes which the connotation of words undergo in the progress of the human race."

Said Hobbs " Words are the counterfoils of wise men but money of fools. The wise man reckons his coin at its present value, the miser calulates the value of his hoarded treasure at its original purchasing power.

It has been said that " England is England and India is India", and implied that the conditions in England entitle woman to be called " Woman" whereas those obtaining in India do nothing better than " Female." This is staggering, for what women of England have in common with the women of any land is far more important, essential and wonderful, than what they have in contrast. " One touch of Nature makes the the whole world keen" say Shakespeare. " The Colonals Lady and Judy O'grady are sisters under their skin." Sir, the first rule in the regulation now under discussion runs thus " Female candidates if they so desire shall be examined in a separate place under superintendence of ladies." If some of my friends set a value on the word " Female." I should suggest a change in this rule. Let the rule be modified thus stand " Female candidates......under Female superintendence." I am sure persons who are usually entrusted with this work of superintendence will object to the word " Female Superintendent."

I have personally been in a Women's Training College in Cambridge and not a Female Training College as it is called here. Sir, women come to the University to improve their usefulness to society by intellectual training. Nothing should be done which would in the least lower her in the estimation of the public,

This world-wide efforts of my sex to a recognition of her rights, privileges, and proper position are called " Woman Suffrage" and not " Female suffrage." Before I sit down, Sir, I wish to thank the members for giving me a patient hearing and to express my hope that this august Assembly will not decide this vital matter without due deliberation. "

There was a loud cheer as I sat down and then we adjourned for tea. H. E. who is the Chancellor of the University always comes to tea with the Fellows of the Senate at their annual meeting. On hearing I was to move this resolution on his arrival he asked the Vice-Chancellor to ask me to move my resolution as he would like to hear what I had to say about the matter. At the end of my speech he congratulated me as did all the others. As a result they all supported me, where I expected opposition and the Senate recommended the word "Female" to be changed to "Woman." The Government accepted this recommendation.

(f) Censure motion.

The Syndicate is the Executive body of the University. Women can do good work here and can save many a student from disaster. I shall give you here an incident to show how a student was saved from a great injustice and high-handedness on the part of the Superintendent of the Examination Hall. An Oriya student sat for Law Examination in the Ravenshaw College. He had certain unpleasantness with the Warden of the Hostel a couple months before his examination. He was driven out of the Hostel inspite of his entreaty to the Warden. On the second day of the examination he was not allowed to sit for his examination at the suggestion of the warden by the Superintendent of the Hall, who was the Principal of the College. The student approached each of the members of the Govering Body but no one would help him and take up his case. When I came to Cuttack during the Christmas time he saw me and I advised him to represent his case to the Syndicate as I knew I would have justice from the Syndicate. I asked him to send me 15 copies of his representation which I distributed to the members of the Syndicate. The matter came up before the Syndicate and I took up the case of this wronged student. I urged that the Superintendent had no right to exclude the student from appearing in the examination when the student did not break the rules of the Examination Hall. The Superintendent was censured for dishonouring the roll number which was issued by the University to the student regarding

examination. I urged also that the student was entitled to have a re-examination and my views were accepted by the 15 members (officials and non-officials) of the Syndicate and only three opposed. A special examination was held for the student at Cuttack and he passed. I was told by the Warden and the D. P. I. that I did wrong in taking up the student's cause. I fully believe that no gentlemen, members of the Syndicate would have taken up the poor student's cause if there had been no woman to urge it. I was complimented by late Sir Jwala Prasad who was a member of the Syndicate and Judge of the Patna High Court and was told that my work was a record for any University.

(g) **Election to the University :—**

The Patna University Regulation was going to be amended. I found that seats to the Legislative Assembly were given to the members of the Senate who were there as representative of various bodies. I decided to bring a motion to recognise Bihar and Orissa Council of Women as a recognised body and to allow a seat to a woman to the Senate. I had various discussions with the Vice-Chancellor and the Education Minister and at last they agreed to my proposal. I stood as a candidate from the Bihar and Orissa Council of Women. As already mentioned there was no love lost between the President, who was a Governor's wife, and myself and so she put up a candidate of her own, the Inspectress of Schools to contest the seat with me. The majority of the English members of the Council helped the candidate of the President to defeat me. My spirit was not damped because I knew my strength in support of Bihari members. Most of their husbands were Government officers but in spite of it they all promised to support my candidature. Members from different branches of the Council were brought down to support the President's candidate. Great excitement prevailed in the town as every one knew that the fight was really between Miss Das and the Governor's wife. Fellows of the Senate took keen interest in my candidature and wished me to return. Some of them sent their wives who

were members of our Council to vote for me. Wives of high officials went from house to house canvassing for the candidate supported by Governor's wife.

The great day arrived. Bihari gentlemen kept their promise to me by sending their wives in large numbers. About 100 Bihari ladies were in the Hall where voting was to take place. Some Oriya Ladies who were my friends promised to give me votes, but voted for the other candidate. The Returing Officer who was an English Lady, wife of a High Court Judge, was surprised to find so many Behari ladies present and asked me whether they were all members as she had never seen them before. I gave her the membership book and she looked into it and found their names in it. Votes were recorded in the voting papers sent by the University. When they were counted it was found I had been returned by a large majority. There was such a cheer from the Bihari ladies that the English ladies were kept silent. I was overjoyed and was delighted to find so many friends among Bihari ladies. I owed my victory to Behari ladies. Is this possible in Orissa ? Not at all.

The next day when I entered the Senate House where all the Fellows were present I was greeted and welcomed by loud cheers.

(h) Creating scholarship for I.A. women students :—

Even in 1931 there was no College for women in Bihar and Orissa though through my efforts I.A. classes were started in Ravenshaw Girls' High School in Cuttack to prosecute for higher education. I wished to start I.A. classes in the Bankipore Girls' High School. There were only two high schools for girls in Bihar and Orissa. Finding that the Government would not be able to start a Women's College I sent a resolution to the Syndicate of Patna University where I was a member to start I.A. classes in the Bankipore Girls' High School. I did not know it would create such nervousness on the part of the Government. My resolution was rejected by the Syndicate as both the Minister of Education and the D.P.I. pleaded their

inability to start the classes for want of money. Great discussions followed and I refused to withdraw my resolution. When I decided to have a thing I have it. I asked the Registrar of the University to send my resolution in the Agenda of the Senate Meeting. The Syndicate thought I was joking with the Minister (whom I called uncle) I would not go against his wishes. But they little knew me, when the resolution appeared in the Agenda of the Senate meeting, the Minister of Education asked me to withdraw my resolution and to move an amendment written by him. I flatly refused though I was a nominated Fellow. I asked him to let it be moved by the D.P.I. or any Professor of a Government College. Then I left him. At the meeting of the Senate, the Vice-Chancellor came to me and asked me to withdraw the resolution. I asked him "Is my resolution unreasonable that it is creating such disturbance?" He said "No, it is a reasonable resolution and your demand is legitimate and proper. The whole Senate will support you. But Government has not got the money this year and they will be put into a ridiculous possition. So withdraw it." I said "Very well, I shall withdraw it on condition that Government would give scholarships to 3 girls to prosecute their studies either in this province or in Bengal." Government consented. But though I moved my resolution abusing government for giving step-fatherly interest to the women of our province, yet after having assurances from them to create scholarships for women for the next 2 years I withdrew my resolution. Thus saved the Government from a ridiculous position.

(i) Creation of Domestic Science Economy and Hygiene Board:—

I sent a resolution to the Senate for the creation of Domestic Science and Hygiene Board, and knew there would be no objection. When I moved the resolution a Fellow stood up and asked me whether I was creating these subjects for men students also, I said "No, but it would be better for man to gain experience of domestic science, because a time may come when women may like to enter all departments where men are

now, and men may go back to the domestic line." There was great laughter and the resolution was passed.

(j) Concluding remarks :—

The Primary Education Conference was called by the then Education Minister at my repeated requests. It had many sessions and in opening the Conference the Hon'ble Minister mentioned my name that at my suggestion he was obliged to call the Conference. I was put on various committees. Thus it will be seen that I had great privilege in playing a part in the education of my Province. I was a member of the Primary Education of my Province. I was a member of the Primary Education Committee of the Patna Muncipality, which controls the Primary Education and through my influence in the Board of Secondary Education I could influence the secondary education of the Province and as a member of the Syndicate of the Patna University I could influence the higher education of the girls throughout the whole Province. I was therefore able to to voice the aspiration of women from primary to higher stage before competent authorities and was very happy for all these privileges.

CHAPTER VI

"LIFE AT PATNA"

(a) How I came to be a Municipal Commissioner :—

When Bihar and Orissa Municipal Act came into force I wanted to be a Municipal Commissioner as it was my father's Act, and I took great interest in the Bill. I wanted to work under this Act. Sir Ganesh Dutta Singh was the Minister of the Local Self Government in My father's place. He was an orthodox man and did not like women taking part in politics, but he was a clean man. When Dr. Sachidananda Sinha, the then Finance Minister approached him to nominate me as a Municipal Commissioner he remarked " Manu the lawgiver has said keep women away from politics. I shall place Miss Das any where but not in politics." But women cannot be kept away

from anything in this age. Though my case seemed hopeless I did not lose heart. Biharis are very different from Oriyas. They have no prejudice where women are concerned. They liked to encourage women irrespective of caste, creed and nationality to take part in public activities. The then prospective chairman who was a nephew of Sir Ganesh came to me and asked me whether I would like to be a Commissioner. Hearing I would love to be one and would join his party, he with his followers made Sir Ganesh nominate me in place of a Bihari gentleman who willingly resigned in my favour. What a difference between the Oriyas and Biharis! The one would keep women away from everything and usurp all powers, the other opened the door to women to enter all avenues. Thus I became the first woman Municipal Commissioner.

A woman as a Municipal Commissioner can be very useful and can realise more than men the sufferings of the humanity and the injustice done to them. I had the unique privi-ledge of serving on various committees *e.g.* Education, P.W.D. Public Health, Law and Appeal Committee. I served on all the committees and did my best as I had no personal interest to serve, but only to serve the public for their good and so I was loved by the people.

The Public Health Committee is a most important Committee in the Municipality. Our Purdah ladies are generally ignorant of the elementary principles of sanitation and hygiene. Many edpidemics break out in the Zenana. Officers of the Municipality cannot visit the Zenana. Only a woman can help Zenana women. I approached the Hon'ble Minister to appoint a Sanitary Inspectress to visit the Zenana and help the women and he promised to do so.

(b) Appeal Committee :—

The work of the Appeal Committee brought me in touch with the sufferings of the poor. I represented every ward of the Municipality on the Appeal Committee. I was the President of the Committee. This Committee deals with the assessment of

taxes and hears the grievances of the taxpayers. If the taxes are unjustly assessed this committee hears the objection and redresses the grievances if they are legitimate. My experience of this committee is that it has no pity or sympathy for the poor. It is always willing to reduce the taxes of the rich as the rich have more influence. They wish to pay less and take advantage of their position. When I was on this committee my endeavour was always to reduce the taxes of the poor as they hardly get any benefit from the Municipality. Here I shall give you an incident. The meeting of the Appeal Committee was fixed to hear the objection petition filed by the lawyers of Bankipur area. We were five members of the Appeal Committee. I was the President of the Committee. Two of them were lawyers. They knew that they would not be able to help their lawyer friends so long when I was present so they absented themselves. The Chairman of the Municipality told me that it would be the most important meeting as it dealt with law points and without the help of the lawyers, whether it would not be wise for me to postpone the meeting. I said " No we are a quorum I wish to hold the meeting. I understand these lawyers, they have not got any case, only wish to raise objection and I would like to deal with them. I assured him that the Municipality would not be a loser but gain considerably." The day of the meeting of the Appeal Committee was fixed. I entered the District Board office where the meeting of the Appeal Committee was held. I found the Hall was full of lawyers who were all my friends. They said that owing to my activities they were thinking of disposing of their houses as their taxes were not only doubled, but in many cases enhancements were three times more than what they paid before. I told them, smilingly that I would personally go through their cases and would certainly do justice, but they must be prepared for re-assessment if I found they were under-assessed. The lawyers asked me to clear the position of the Municipality, whether it had any right to assess them on rental basis, as before they were assessed by the valuation of a house and they asked a Judge of the High

Court, who was then the officiating Judge of the Patna High Court to argue the case, as all the lawyers had the same case. The Hon'ble Judge brought a bag full of law books to confuse me and put them all on my table and argued the case for half an hour that the municipality had no right to tax them. He brought references from Common Law of England, Calcutta Municipal Act and many other Laws. I pointed out his fallacy in argument by drawing his attention to Bihar and Orissa Municipal Act of 1923 and said that since the introduction of it, the municipality had nothing to do with other acts and read out sections to show the power of the municipality. They asked me whether my decision was final on the point. I drew their attention to the section and pointed out that the decision of the Committee was final. They all whispered and discussed amongst themselves I said smilingly "Some of you are great lawyers and one is also a High Court Judge and for me to discuss on law points with you must seem to you ridiculous but I can send this case to the Legal Remembrancer for his opinion if the Hon'ble Judge gives consent." They all agreed. The case was sent. In a fortnight's time the file came back and the opinion was that I was right. When I told this to my Lawyer friends, they all laughed and said that they knew that they had no case, if I had been absent they could have got their points by other lawyer members of the committee and nearly Rs. 40,000/- were increased from the assessment of the lawyers and the Chairman was satisfied. After this many a time, I had to inspect houses to find out the real hardships of the land lords. I will narrate here another incident. Though I was only a nominated member, but the Board was pleased with my work and the Chairman gave me his telephone as the Municipal office is nearly 7 miles distant from my residence.

(o) Stopping Municipal conservancy.

In the morning sometimes I went out to inspect roads and found the refuses were heaped on the side of the road. I sent for the Sanitary Inspector. He informed me his difficulties as he is required to clean the compounds of the officials and as

they had few carts, they could not attend to the roads. I said cleaning of the official compounds must be stopped. He said they have been doing it for years. I said that now when I was there this custom must be stopped. I phoned to the Chief Justice, District Judge, Magistrate, Civil Surgeon and others and explained to them the difficulties of doing their work and neglecting the others. I informed them that I have ordered that the carts should not go to their compounds to clean but they must ask their sweepers to do it and I would order to put a dust bin at the side of their gates. They all readily agreed. In my work as a municipal commissioner, I always enjoyed the sympathy and co-operation of non-officials and officials and hence my work became a pleasure to me. In the naming of a street, my opinion was sought and as I was the President of the Committee, my decision prevailed for they knew I had no personal interest. The Government appointed me for three terms and thus I served nine years. I resigned when I left Patna. I was elected by the Municipality to represent it on the the Patna adminstrative and Bankipur Joint Water Works Committee. I was the only non-official amongst the officials who attended the meeting regularly. Had it not been for my presence meetings would have been postponed many a time for want of a quorum. I was a member of this Committee as long as I was in Patna. I took a keen interest in helping the public in getting pipe water.

(c) Starting S.P.C.A.

When I was a Commissioner the Municipality did not possess motor trucks, and all the work was done by carts pulled by bullocks. Seventy-five percent of bullocks were diseased. We asked the Municipal Board to sanction money to buy bullocks from the Sonepur Mela and send the disabled bullocks to Prinjrapole. The Board would not sanction money to get new bullocks to replace the disabled ones, I went to the District Magistrate and asked his help in the matter. But under the new Municipal Act he was powerless to do anything. I suggested to him to give me a police Sergeant to go with me and the Commissioner's wife to

the bullock sheds, examine them and then send him a report. He agreed. Thus with the help of the Police Sergeant we did our work and sent a report to the Magistrate who asked me that if according to the report he took away all the bullocks and put them in the Veternary Hospital how would the Municipality manage their conservancy work ? It was a difficult problem. I suggested to him whether he could send a letter to the Chairman of the Municipality enclosing the report and threatening to prosecute the Commissioners for using disabled bullocks, unless they were replaced, by fresh bullocks. At the meeting of the Board the Magistrate's letter was placed and the Board was obliged to sanction money for new bullocks and send disabled bullocks to the Veterinary Hospital.

I found the horses who pulled the "Ekkas" were often overburdened having to carry too many passengers. I prosecuted the drivers of such "Ekkas." We used to go out on the streets daily and whenever we found such cases of cruelty they were prosecuted. Bihar and Orissa Council of Womens took up the work thus we started the S.P.C.A.

Tenders of the Municipality

As I have already said I was a member of almost all the sub-committees of the Patna municipal board. The Congress Party and the Chairman's Party always voted for me to be a member of any committee. In my case there was no discussion or controversy, and it gave me great pleasure and made me feel proud to be a member of the board where both parties had confidence in me. Those who, my readers, have served on municipal boards have got experience of what keen contest goes on for accepting tenders. Most of the members want the tenders of their own men to be accepted by the Board. But here on this Board I had the unique privilege of giving my decision which was accepted by all. For everyone knew I had no personal interests. All tenders are placed before the Board in a sealed cover and the Board selects a teader according to its merits.

At one meeting tenders for the feeding of bullocks with grams, oats, etc., were placed before us. I selected the same man who had the order for last year. It was a Chairman Party's man. The members of the other party felt miserable and felt I had done great injustice and had favoured the Chairman. Before the order was placed in the book, I said that on one condition the tender would be accepted and that was that some commissioners should visit the feeding of the bullocks and if they found that bad grams had been supplied, he would forfeit that month's money. The man readily agreed. I then asked the board to select commissioners to visit the places of feeding. The feeding took place at four in the morning, in winter time. The Board deputed me to visit the place with some commissioners to be selected by me. One morning I took two commissioners with me and arrived at the feeding place at 4 : 15 in the morning. The place was five miles away from my house and when we arrived I found that the grams were all bad. We took some grams and put them in a parcel, sealed it, and put our names on the packet and sent it to the board for inspection. The man was fined. Since then the contractors were very careful about submitting tenders as long as I was on the Board.

Another incident I shall narrate here about giving contract for the electrification of the municipal building. Rupees 10,000/- was sanctioned. When tenders were opened I found that a relation of the Vice-Chairman gave the lowest tender and the specifications given were quite good as nothing but English materials were to be used. I accepted this tender. The Board was silent. Someone whispered to me that he was the Vice-Chairman's relation. I said being the Vice-Chairman's relation he would take interest in the work. The Board left it to my discretion and I made the condition that before being paid on completion of the work, I would, with some commissioners, inspect the whole work and if any deception was detected in the supply of materials and the work done, he would lose all his money. No one would take the contract on this condition.

But a Bengali contractor who did the work in my house and had deceived me, hearing the necessary penalty came forward and accepted the contract. I told the Board how he had deceived me and had lost much money. The Board heard it all and accepted the man. He did the work well as he did not wish to lose his money a second time.

Though this tender business was very troublesome, I always enjoyed doing it.

CHAPTER VII

(a) MY ACTIVITIES AS A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE PRINCE OF WALES MEDICAL COLLEGE

One day while I was at Cuttack I received a wire from Sir Ganesh Dutta, the then Minister of Health appointing me as a member of the Governing Body of the Prince of Wales Medical College Patna. I was not willing to serve on the Governing Body as there was no woman student in the College. I wired in reply and asked to be excused. He wired back that as I was always fighting for representation of women on various Bodies this first appointment of woman on the Governing Body was great honour done to me and so I should accept it. My father also advised me to do so and I accepted.

I went to Patna in the early part of June to attend a Selection Committee meeting to select students for admission into Medical College.

Here I shall give an incident that took place in the Select Committee. The majority of the members of this Body are officials. When I attended the meeting, I asked the Principal of the College whether any instructions had been received from Government as to the manner of selecting students. He gave me the letter from Government which stated distinctly that students should be selected only on merit. I was glad to know

this. But the Principal damped my spirit by saying that there were a dozen letters from high officials and also from the President of the Governing Body himself, recommending their nominees. I asked the Principal not to place these letters before this committee as they would influence members and they would not be able to do justice to the students. The Principal told us that this practice has been going on for a number of years. I observed that as long as I am a member I would protest against such procedure as Government instructions were definite on this point. The Principal told us that besides the official letters he also received verbal messages and they dared not disregard such messages. But I protested against this strongly and would not have the letters of recommendations placed before the meeting which would be prejudicial to the interest of meritorious students. I brought a resolution to place it before the meeting of the Governing Body which the Committee did not like to accept but as I threatened to leave the meeting on protest the Committee had to record my resolution and I assured them that they would not be put to any trouble over this. Therefore we resolved that no letters of recommendations from officials or non officials should be placed before the Committee but that students be selected on merit only.

The next day at the meeting of the Governing Body, when the President, the Commissioner of the Division took the chair, the minute book was placed before him, I asked the President whether he would mind considiering item No. 7 on the agenda first. Before he read the minutes he took a paper from his pocket and remarked smilingly, "Let me see whether my candidates have been selected." I asked him to read the relevant minutes first. He frowned and read the resolution and his face became quite red. He put the paper back in his pocket and sat quite still. The official members were shaking in their shoes. I took pity on them and came to their rescue by adressing the President and telling him that it was my resolution and the members were not in favour of it. But as I

insisted on its being recorded, it had to be put there. I asked him if he would like to know why I had brought forward such a resolution. He said " If you please Miss Das I shall be very glad to know it." I told him that if we were to select candidates on merit only, we would not read the letters of recommendation from high Government officials, for once those letters were read it would mean an insult to them to have those letters set aside in favour of meritorious students only, according to rules. Hence I thought I would rather not have those letters read than read them and then set them aside that would mean insult which we could not do. I asked him "Sir may I know your openion as to whether I am right or wrong." The President smild and thanked me for having explained the whole thing to him. He said that in future no letters of recommendation should be placed, before the Committee. So we started doing the business of the day and most of my recommendations for the selection of students were accepted.

When my friends heard about this incident they told me that I would never be recommended to be a member again. But I was nominated to this Governing Body for three consecutive years. The Hon'ble Minister told me that both the President and the Principal wanted me on this body to help them. Thus I served this Body for three years and always my recommendations had preference to others.

This incident shows that the right sort of officials cannot but appreciate honest and straight-forward action like mine. This is proved by their putting me on various bodies in Patna where it was always my bad luck to go against the views of the officials, but my work was appreciated by the Government.

My readers, is it possible to do anything like that now under our own Government ? Under the British Government my honesty of purpose was appreciated, but now it seems straight forwardness, honesty and integrity are at low ebb.

CHAPTER VIII

RAILWAY ACTIVITIES

(a) Compensation for Cocoanuts.

In Patna cocoanut was not available so I wrote to a friend in Cuttack to send me two bags of them. When I sent my man to the Railway station to take delivery of the bags, I was told that the parcel had not arrived. After waiting for sometime I sent the man again and told him to weigh the bags and if he found the bags in any way tampered, he was not to take delivery nor give the receipt. I asked the Station Master to open the bags in his presence and they found that the contents were mostly cocoanut shells, and fibres and stones. I refused to take delivery and wrote to the Railways to give me compensation. I got a cocoanut from the bazar paid 5 annas for it and had it weighed. On that basis, I calculated the number of cocoanuts that two bags weighing 4 maunds would contain and on that basis I charged Rs. 90/- as compensation. My friends laughed and said my application would be rejected and I would get no compensation. But the Railway authorities finding my case very strong paid me full Rs. 90/-

(b) Reserved compartment tragic-comedy.

In December 1925 just before Christmas, I wanted to come from Patna to Calcutta but no reserved berth could be available at an intermediate station. The Station Master at Patna told me he would try and find some accommodation for me. I arrived at the station for the Punjab Mail. When the mail arrived the Station Master, guard and others were all busy trying to find a berth for me, but failed as the train was over-crowded having 8 to 15 passengers in all the first and second class compartments. We walked from one end of the platform to the other but without any succcss. The Station Master then asked me to tell him where I would like to get in and he would put me there, as he could not keep the train waiting any longer as it was already late. I made him open out a first class compartment. I got in and found it was over full. Two

persons sleeping on each berth. As I sat on the nearest seat I got two kicks from the sleepers. The train was just in motion, and through the windows I called out to my servants to inform the Station Master that I was being assaulted by the passengers and would like to get down. The train gradually slowed down and stopped and the Station Master, guard and others came running up to my compartment. I was standing near the door and told them what had happened. Seeing that I had not got a berth the Station Master made two ladies come down from the upper berth. They were so frightened that they got down and the Station Master put my bedding down on the upper berth opened it and helped me to get up and told me that if I were in any trouble I should pull the alarm chain and stop the train for help. He then left and the train moved on. There were 8 Burmese ladies in the compartment. They were very rich for I found diamonds flashing from their ears, fingers etc. They were very angry with me and began abusing me loudly. They began smoking big cigars and spat on the floor. The compartment was full of smoke as all the doors and windows were closed it being severely cold. I got nearly suffocated and got down and opened a window, but two women pushed me aside and put the window up. I did not understand their language. It was midnight. I got a very bad headache and asked them to stop talking when they heard me speaking, they shouted even more. I got desperate and pulled the chain. The train stopped a few minutes after. The guard came with a railway police to my compartment and I told them what had happended and I could not sleep. He took out his note-book and recorded the case and asked them to get down. Their men folk seeing the guard and police come up asked what was the matter. On hearing the story they asked us to forgive their women and assured me that they would not disturb me any more. I asked the guard and the police not to take any further action. They warned the ladies and left. After that I had a quiet night. In the morning when I got down from the berth they fetched my slippers and seemed quite friendly.

We arrived at Howrah Station. When I got down I looked and found to my dismay a label of a reserved compartment hanging from the door handle. I realised that the compartment had been reserved for the Burmese ladies. So after all I was a trespasser in their compartment and they could have easily prosecuted me.

But the fault was of the Station Master and Guard of the Patna Station. Is this not a comedy of errors my readers ? I forgot to tell you that as a Magistrate I tried all railway cases and so I knew the railway rules.

CHAPTER IX

JAIL ACTIVITIES

(a) Women political prisoners.

I worried Government to place women on various Boards and Committee, as that time was very different from the present and unfortunately in those days there was no woman in Patna to take up these responsibilities so I had to be put in all these responsible places. I did not mind this at all for themore work I had the happier I felt. I was appointed the first Woman visitor in Patna Jail. My duty was to visit the female ward and represent their grievances if any to Government and give suggestions for improvement.

Many ladies of good family had been arrested for Civil disobedience movement. One day while visiting the Jail, I went to these undertrial prisoners. They were seated under a tree. I asked them " Have you got any grievances ?" They said, " We have got plenty, but what is the good of complaining when we are here. I said " If your grievances are reasonable I would approach the authorities an try to redress them." Then some of them said, "Give us fruits and " chatu " and not rice, as the rice and dal and ata are full of sand and stones." The Jailor was with me and denied the allegation and told me I would find out the truth by visiting the kitchen. The women

then asked me to let them have their beddings and saries which were sent from their homes, but were kept in the Jailor's office. The Jailor said that under the rules they could not have them. I assured the ladies that if they were entitled to have them under the rules, they would get them that same evening. I then went with the Jailor to the kitchen and found a thala nicely arranged with rice, dal, vegetable and a bit of lemon. I tasted them and found nothing wrong with it. I told the Jailor it was nicely cooked. My next action made the Jailor nervous. I walked into the kitchen and opened a big " Dekchi." I asked him to get a spoon and took up a spoon full of rice from the bottom of the Dekchi, put it on the 'thala' and picked up large number of black stones. The Jailor said they were black rice. I then asked him to put them in to his mouth and tell me if they were rice or stones. He hesitated, but I made him taste them and asked him what they were. He said, " Madam, they are stones." I made further examination and found that the complaints made by the ladies were true. I told the Jailor that the allegations made by the ladies were quite true and he kept quiet.

I then went with him to the office room and asked him for the Jail Code. He brought it and I asked him to show me the rules which prohibited from giving the beddings etc. to the ladies. He showed me a rule appplicable to real prisoners and not to the undertrial prisoners. but they were quite different. The Jailor had discretionary powers to see that the undertrial prisoners do not take anything by getting things from their homes. I asked him to give the ladies their beddings and saries, after having examined them.

Then I wrote a strong remark in the Visitors' Book regarding the food and its bad quality which was given to the undertrial prisoners to harrass them. On my next visit the Jailor told me that an order has come from the Government that I should not visit the political prisoners or their kitchen. I asked the Jailor who had sent the order ? The Jailor replied that the Superintendent of the Jail would explain and I found

him standing outside. I asked him about this order and from whom he has received it. He repeated what the Jailor has said and told me to visit the criminal women prisoners only and not the political. I asked him again whose order it was and wanted to see the order. He sent the Jailor to fetch the letter from the office. He took the letter and read it himself first but said he could not show it to me. I asked whether the order was from the Government or I. G. He said he was sorry he could no disclose the name. I thanked him and asked him to give me a paper which the Jailor brought. I drafted a letter to the Judicial Secretary of Government then and there informing him how I was prevented from doing my duties to the female prisoners under orders of the Jail Superintendent. I said, " It seems to me that since I took up my duties, the Jail Code must have been amended, as there is no mention of political prisoners in the Jail Code. " I requested him to send me a copy of the amended Jail Code. This would help me to do my duties as otherwise I refused to visit the Jail. I read out my letter to the Superintendent and asked him if my statement was correct. He said " yes. " I asked him to put his signature on my, letter. Then with his permission I took up the receiver and phoned to the Judicial Secretary telling him about the letter I was sending him and I asked him to place my letter immediately before the Judicial member. I then left the Jail and waited for the reply. I was told that my letter made quite a commotion in the Patna Secretariat. The reply from Government came and it said that the order is not for me at all but it concerned the male detenus and that the I. G. had made a mistake about the order. I was to continue my work as before.

A few days after the Superintendent of jail was transferred. Disinterested work always have better fate.

(a) My daring action in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement prisoners.

During my stay in Patna I did many daring things but not as daring as that which I am going to narrate here, and I escaped being punished.

One day at Patna I was asked by Mrs Hossain Imam to come to her house immediately, I went there and found the room full of influential congress men of Patna who asked me, "What has occurred in the jail this afternoon.'' "I replied I do not know any thing" Mrs. Hassan Imam said "You are a Jail visitor and you should know what is happening there." I said "My duty was to visit the jail once a month to the female prisoners. So naturally the daily happenings in the Jail are unknown to me." Then some one said I must find out what happened in the jail that afternoon because they saw the Police and military entering the jail that afternoon and soon after they heard the report of firing inside the jail. They thought that many of their relatives were killed who were arrested and in the jail and I was asked to bring scme information about them and their safety. I explained to them why it would be impossible for me to bring them any news as I would not be allowed to go to the men's side. They would however take no excuses from me and thought I was the only person who could get some correct news from the jail by seeing the political prisoners myself and so must help them.

Something within me stirred to take this job up and do something. I said " Very good, I would try to do it, even if I am arrested." Next morning at 9.30 a.m. I enetered the jail, The outer compound of the jail was full of motor cars, ekkas and a crowd of people. They cheered me I entered as the news had leaked out that I was going to the Jail to find out all about the firing. The Jailor was there and I asked him to come with me to the female ward. We went together. I told him that I would also like to go to the Congress prisoners and whether he would take me to see them. He emphatically said "No." I did not worry him further with any question or requests. During my visit to the female prisoners I gathered from the Jailor the position of the tents of the political prisoners and after I left the female ward made my way towards them. The Jailor got nervous. He was watching my movements. I first went to the Carpet Department and from this to the Oil Department. Then I went straight to the Congress Camp with the

Jailor. He was greatly troubled and did not know how to stop me visiting these prisoners as it would mean his dismissal from service. I however paid no heed to his pleadings, but just walked on. When the Congress people saw me, they came out of their tents and cheered me saying " Miss Das ki Jai." They were greatly surprised to see me there with the Jailor. They stood round me and I asked them to tell me what had happened in the Jail the previous day and whether there were any casualties among them. The Jailor forbade them to answer any question of mine. I told them not to obey the Jailor but to tell me frankly all that happened as I had to tell them to their friends who were anxious and wanted to know the truth. The poor Jailor was dumbfounded at my daring but could do nothing. The prisoners said there were no casualties and I asked for the cause of the firing in the Jail. They said that when the Superintendent came to visit them they refused to say "Sirkar Salam" but only saluted him. This enraged the Superintendent and they were asked to keep to the cells the whole day. They refused to do so but they were forced to do and in trying to do this the Police used lathis and fired some shots. Several of them were injured but no one had died. I spent about ten minutes with them and gathered the information I required. The Jailor was greatly disturbed and was actually trembling. I told the Jailor he could only forcibly eject me by a Magistrate and I would take the consequence, but must gather the information, I wanted before leaving the Jail. I asked him to take me to the Hospital where the injured men were. He refused but followed me silently. I assured him that I would take all the responsibility of my action and that he would not be dismissed. I entered the Hospital and found 20 injured men bandaged and in bed. The injuries were not serious. They also told me the same story. I scolded the students for breaking Jail rules. I asked them whether

they were comfortable and when they said they were, I then left them and came to the office. When the office window was opened I found 2000 people waiting outside. I came out, stood on a platform and told them that there were no deaths, but only slight injuries as a result of yesterday affair. They then quietly dispersed believing my statments.

I came back to the office and, phoned to the Hon. Judicial Member who was an Englishman, and asked to see him at once to speak to him on a most important matter in connection with the Jail. He told me to come at once. When I entered his office he smiled and asked me what the matter was. I narrated all that I had done that morning inside the Jail. How I had disobeyed the Jailor and went against his repeated requests. I said that I knew there was great excitment in the City and there was fear of a disturbance unless they had some authentic news about the happenings of yesterday. At the request of the influential Congressmen I promised to bring in news and pacify them and with my bold action I managed to quiet the crowd outside the Jail and sent them away quietly. Then I said that as I had broken the rules I was ready to face the consequences and requested him not to punish the Jailor for my action.

He smiled and said " Miss Das you have done a most daring thing. No man would have done what you did, and I on behalf of the Government thank you as you have managed to avert serious trouble by the mob." So ended my activities.

Think and tell me my readers, Can I or any one else dare to break the jail rules ? Congressmen never thanked me for the daring work I did for them. Whereas the then Government made me a Jail visitor so long I stayed in Patna. What a difference ?

CHAPTER X

BUILDING ACTIVITIES

(a) Building of my own house :

My late sister Sudhanshubala after being enrolled in the High Court of Patna began practising in the High Court. She wanted to build a house to continue practising in Patna with her brother who was a barrister. She applied for a plot of land at Sinha Library Road. There were thirty other applicants for this plot and her application was rejected. I personally approached the Home Member Sir Hugh Machperson. He was surprised that I should want to build a house in Patna. When I have a palatial building at Cuttack. But when I explained that the house was meant primarily for my sister, he allotted the land. I transferred the land in my name and wished to build a house myself. All my friends laughed at the idea, as it was not a woman's job, they said, and challenged me to build it. I took up the challenge and told them that my house would be better and cheaper than theirs. I had some friends in the P.W.D. and they all promised to help me in this my first attempt to build a house. I got an estimate for my house made by the P.W.D. amounting to Rs. 50,000 -. It seemed to me too much. I first collected the prices of materials directly for Brick, Surki and Iron. Then I asked the P.W.D. to send me a man who would give me an estimate room by room. I went over things with him myself and found I could build my house for pratically half the amount quoted by the P.W.D. I called for tenders from various contractors and gave them my specifications in which the detiails were even more minutely given than the P.W.D. One contractor agreed to do the work according to my specification and estimate for Rs. 30,000. He accepted the contract thinking I would not be able to detect his bad work and so he would be able to make a big profit. But inspite of various public activities I daily used to supervise the work of my house and spent an hour or two at it. I used to demolish the work which was not done according to specification and had it done

over again. When my house was completed it became a show-place to my friends. At the house warming function, I got prizes from my friends for having built my house so well and so much cheaper than theirs.

In the earthquake of 1934 almost all buildings in Patna suffered more or less but my house was not damaged at all except in the plaster work. Sri Ganesh Dutt Singh the them Minister had his house built by P.W.D. at a cost of Rs. 65,000/- When he heard that my house cost much less he came to see it and asked me how I could manage to do it. I replied to him in joke "You better have me as your Chief Engineer and you will find I would make your department not like" Public Waste Department we could save money and divide the profit." He laughed and said "I would consider your application when it comes." He brought his Engineer to see my house. He did not know that the very same Engineer had helped me with hints and advice to build my house cheaply. Since then I earned a name for building houses cheap. I gained much experience through building my own house of which I was quite proud. I furnished my house well and made a lovely garden with the help of a coolie only, though people thought I had expert malis. The name of my house was "Sailasram." It was in Sinha Library Road. I had a very happy time there. Many years after I sold my house, when I decided to live in Cuttack permanently according to my father's desire.

(b) Building of Lady Stevenson Hall.

The Bihar and Orissa Council of Women in Patna raised some money to build a Hall, but the money collected was insufficient. So we decided to ask Government to give the requisite sum to finish the Hall. We approached the Education Minister to give a grant of Rs. 16,000/- to erect the Hall. He at once refused saying that Government could not give grant for a Women's Club. I laughed and asked him "Who told you it is going to be a Women's Club?" It is going to be an Education Centre to teach subjects not taught in Scools and Colleges." He asked

me to mention what subjects we were going to teach. I gave him a long list: e.g. Adult Education, Work Party, Physicial Exercise, Debating Club, Music teaching, lectures by eminent persons and many other things. He laughed and said " I know you. You have, I see, made up your mind to have the money. My life will be made miserable until I grant it. So you had better send in your application, plans and estimate and I shall grant ycu the money." I was delighted with the success of my mission and told our Council about it. I sent an application supported by plans and estimates etc. for a grant of Rs. 16,000/-, for the estimated cost of the house was Rs. 32,000/-.

One day I got a message over the phone from the Education Secretary to come over to the office at the Secretariat at once as the Honourable Minister wanted to have some information regarding my application for grant. I went over to his office and found the Education Minister and Chief Engineer both were present there. The Secretary told me that the plan which I had estimated for Rs. 32,000/- for which I was requesting a grant of Rs. 16,000/- from Government, had been estimated at Rs.64,000 - by the Chief Engineer. He therefore wanted to know how I was going to meet the deficit. I was surprised to hear this as I knew my estimate was correct. I asked " Who says it will cost Rs. 62,000/-?" The Chief Engineer replied " I say it." I replied " Your estimate is wrong. Your department charges 50 p.c. more than the actual cost and certainly we are not going to waste so much money by giving a contract to your department." He said, " You are a layman and therefore your estimate is wrong." I said " My house here has only cost me half of what the P.W.D's estimate was." The Secretary told me that unless I accepted the Chief Engineer's estimate, the Minister had no power to sanction the money. I was perplexed on hearing this and wanted a little time to consider it. Both the Minister and the Chief Engineer then left the room. I appealed to the Secretary and asked him to help me out of this difficulty, with a friend's advice. He said " You must accept the Chief Engineer's cstimate first and tell him so and

ask him to show you how much of the building could be finished for Rs. 32,000/- this year. Tell him you would construct that much this year and next year you would collect more money and fiinish the building." I did as he advised. The money was sanctioned I approached Government to give us the money and allow us to appoint a private contractor who would work under P.W.D's suprvision. This was granted and the Lady Stevenson Hall was built and beautfully furnished with the money we had from Government. It cost us nearly Rs. 50,000/- to have sanitary arrangements, a tennis court, compound wall, furniture etc. This was used constantly by the public for their meetings and entertainments. So the public was benefitted by the efforts of the ladies.

CHAPTER XI

ACTIVITIES IN VARIOUS COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS ETC.

(a) Simon Commission.

I was then in Patna. The Simon Commission arrived there one winter morning. The political department of Government issued a circular that those who wished to meet the Commission on their arrival at the special platform must obtain a ticket from the political department and no one will be allowed within the platform without a ticket. The local Congressmen had decided to stage a "Black flag" demonstration on this occasion in the Hardinge Park opposite the special platform. There was also some demonstration from the Oriya residents at Patna for the creation of the new Province of Orissa, I decided at the last moment to see the Oriya demonstration, but I could not go to the platform without a permit, as the Police Sergeant would not allow me to do so. So I went through the Hardinge Park and found two rows of Congressmen standing inside the fencing which separated the park from the Hardinge Road. They had black flags in their hands. Seeing me coming towards them, they cheered and offered me a

black flag which I declined with thanks. As I did not wish to be one of them or stand in their row. I climbed over the fencing and stood right in front of them getting a good view of the platform which was put upon the roadside for the special train conveying the distinguished visitors to Patna.

I was wearing a red coloured Sari and seemed a very prominent figure amongst the Congress people and could be seen very well by officials and non-officials on the platform. As the special train arrived the members of the Commission were cheered by the ladies and gentlemen on the platform and hissed by the Congressmen inside the park uttering such slogans "Simon go back." I was a silent spectator amongst them. I left the place when it was over, never giving a thought to it and did not realise that my presence there could be so misconstrued.

There was a garden party that afternoon in the Hardings Park to meet the Commission and I was there. H. E. the Governor finding me at his table next to him said "I wish to have a word with you after the tea." I said "I am honoured." When the tea was over I went to him and he asked "Why were you among the black flag demonstrators ?" I replied "Can your Excellency ever believe such a thing of me ?" He asked me" "But you were seen there ?" I said "I was there but not as one of them." H.E. looked puzzled. I explained how and why I came to be there standing like a Commander-in-chief in front them, making myself most conspicous. H.E. laughed and thanked me. He was most amused at my recital. I was curious to know who had reported about me to H.E. and seeing Lady Stevenson I told her about my interview with H.E. and and she was very pleased to know the real facts and said "I am relieved, for I never believed knowing you so well, that you would be with the black flag. I said so to H.E. and to the Inspector General of Police who told us about your presence there." After this I went straight to the I.G. and told him that H.E. and Lady Stevenson had more faith in my word than

in the report of the I.G. and told him all about the incident of the morning. We had a hearty laugh over the episode. After this, whenever he saw me at a party or function he would joke with me and said " Miss Das, what have you done with the black flag?" I would laughingly remark "I have kept it in a box to be presented to you on your retirement." Thus ended happily the Black Flag chapter of my life.

(b) Women's Franchise, Activities and resolution on it.

I will tell you here how the Resolution came to be introduced in Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council. I found that the Legislative Councils of many other provinces had given Franchise to women but Bihar and Orissa had not got it. I determined to have it and so I said to the council members and discussed with them the desirability of giving Franchise to women and they agreed. I drew up the Franchise resolution and had it printed, then asked some members to sign the paper and after receiving their signatures I sent them to the Secretary to theCouncil. In this way about 30 members names appeared in the Resolution. The newspaper noticed it and said that Women's Franchise resolution was the most popular resolution of the Session. They did not know my activities in making it a popular resolution. I canvassed very hard and got promise for support from 75 of the members. Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh, the then minister of Local Self Government, and his party (10 or 12 men) were against the Resolution and canvassed against it. The great day for the resolution arrived and I knew that I would win my resolution and it would have an easy passage through the council. Sir Ganesh made a great speech warning the members not to vote for the resolution. He said that if one woman outside the council chamber could influence so many members to support her, then what would happen if that woman enters the Council and gets what she wants. You

would only be puppets in her hand as you are. But members voted all the same for the resolution and Sir Ganesh had to bear an ignominous defeat, i.e., 13 only voted against and 70 for the resolution. Thus I secured the first victory over Sir Ganesh Dutt in 1929. Soon after this a seat in the Council had fallen vacant from the University Constituency and I with the advice of my Behari friends and supporters contested the seat with the veteran councillor. Oh, the excitment and fun I had in this election ! I had appointed no agent to canvass. I myself did all that was needed and it was most gratifying to me that where ever I went for support I got it, except from the congress who gave me a solemn promise that congressmen would take no part in this election. I was doing very well and hoped to be returned by an over-whelming majority. But alas a woman proposed but a man disposed. The ballot box was not in the University. This went against me. Some officers did not like the idea that a woman, especially of Orissa, should represent the University in the legislatative Council and worked against me. They took the Education Minister to task for having me in the Senate. If I had not been there I could not have contested the Seat. I was asked to withdraw with a promise that in the next council I would be nominated, but I listened to no one. On the date of counting the vote my telephone bell went on ringing. A high official of Government was talking to me in my office room. Another high officer wanted to speak to me. He wished me to go to him with the list of my voters. I asked him why. " He said he would like to see." I was very foolish to go inspite of the warning of my official friend. He said " Beware do not disclose your strength." I went to the officer's place. He wanted to know the number of votes I expected. And I told him the truth and that made me lose the election. The counting of votes would have been at 3 p.m. that very day. After he had found out from me that I would be returned, the date was put off for two days, and that made me and my friends nervous and I knew something was happening. However when the votes were counted I found

that I had lost the seat for 2 votes and 22 votet of mine were spoiled. The declaration forms and the voting papers were put into the same envelope. How they were transferred there was a mystery. I saw H.E. the Chancellor and told him how I had lost my seat. However as the council sat only for a week I did not put an election petition. A few months after I came to learn from a friend how I was defeated. The cangress voters though they promised solemnly not to take part init did take part after all. So the counting day was put off to secure these papers. Though I felt a great disappointment in being so defeated, yet I took it in a good spirit and worked for the next election of 1930. I was congratulated on my moral victory by my friends.

I then stood for the second election and I knew I would be returned as the voters of the University constituency would vote for me again. I had faith in their promises. This time my rival was one Sayeed Mahammad Hafeez. He was my friend and we worked together in many committees. A great fight it was and an honourable fight too. Both parties were backed by the public and the votes were almost equally distributed on both sides. I knew that either of us would be defeated by one or two votes only. In this election I secured three Mohammedan votes against my rival. My rival was a popular man, working hard to get into the council to be the President. He was sure of the seat. But owing to my strength, he became nervous. He knew my strength. Here I will give you an incident how when a voter promised me he kept his promise. One morning I went by the Punjab Mail to Arrah to see some Mohammadan voter. I went to a Mohammadan land holder's house. He was an old man. After hearing me he said that he would vote for me. I said, "Do you know who is my rival?" He said "No, tell me his name." I gave him the name. He said "Oh, Hafeez is your rival? He is my relation." And then he kept silent. I felt that he could not vore for me. So I said, "Perhaps now you will find it difficult to support me and so I

am going to strike off your name from my voters list." He said, "Wait, let me think." After 2 or 3 minutes silence he said, "I have decided to vote for you." I said, "Will you kindly let me know why you will support me, whom you never met before and will never meet again, yet you promise to vote for me? Hafeez is your relation and yet you will not give him your support." He said "You are a woman. on this winter morning you took the trouble to come all the way from Patna to see me for my support and Hafeez who is my relation never even sent me a post card about his candidature, so he does not deserve my support. You will have my voting papers." I returned to Patna pleased with my morning's work. Mr. Hafeez came to me the next day and said "Miss Das, you are wonderful, you have taken away my best supporter." There was no ill feeling between us. I knew that I would win by a majority of one or two votes only, but after the counting of votes I found that I was defeated by one vote and was greatly surprised that two voting papers which I registered were not there. If those votes were there, I would have been elected by a majority of 2 votes. I was disappointed at the result and after a little time I began to think about the missing voting papers. So I went to the post office next morning and I found to my surprise that the 3 registered envelopes containing voting papers were on the table. on enquiry I was told that as there was one delivery of the post the voting papers did not reach the University in time. I got some light and knew that through the mistake of the University about the address, there was a delay of one day in the post. I consulted friends and also the senior lawyers: the late Mr. K. B. Dutt, and Mr. P. R. Das. They all thought I had a good case to fight and so I filed an election pettion and the election was set aside. The by-election was ordered in 1931 as the result of my election petition. The Statesman of the 28th January 1931 observed the following.

Statesman

Dated 25-1-1931.

"Women of India are pressing forward with their impact on public life. Miss Shaila Bala Das's action in filing a by-election petition is a portent. She has succeeded in forcing a fresh election for tha Patna Uuiversity constituency and with her record of service she stands a good chance of capturing the seat.

Not only is she a Fellow of the Syndicate of the University, she is in addition the Secretary for the Bihar and Orissa Council of Women. Whether in Bihar or elwewere they have no intention of allowing elections to go against their choice if energy and expression can give them their representation in India's councils."

She had written to her supporter the following letter as she stood to contest the seat for third time :—

Dear Sir,

It is my privilege to solicit your support once again as a candidate for election to the seat reserved in the Legislative Council for the representative of the Patna University. The last election of Mr. Hafeez has been declared void on account of certain irregularities inspite of the fact that I had secured 104 votes against the 102 of my rival candidate-Moulve Mohammad Hafeez. I venture to hope that you will even this time suport my candidature. I rest my candidature not merely on my past services which are known to you but on the additional important ground that if elected through your support I shall be in a better position to represent the great movement for women's education and progress than any of my rivals can be. Nerved by this conviction I have ventured to solicit the suffrage of the University constituency now for the third time in one year. On the first occasion when I contested last year I lost the election by only a few votes. On the last occassion I actually secured a larger number of votes than my opponent and should have been declared duly elected but for the irregularities referred to above. On the present occasion I venture to hope that I shall again get your kind support. It is with this confidence that I am sending this communication to apprise you of my candidature.

Grateful to you for your support in the past and confident of your support in future as well.

I remain
Your Sincerely,

Patna
18-1-31

S. B. DAS.

The public thought that I would be sure to be returned in by-election, but alas, a new candidate came in. I had majority support from Behar Hindus but he came into the field to secure their support. Late Mr. Sachidananda Sinha's letter spoke for what they thought of the 3rd candidate.

Dear Miss Das,

You have asked me for an expression of my opinion on the present University contest in which you are engaged now for the third time during the course of about one year.

I have no hesitation in complying with your request and you are quite welcome to use this letter, if you think it will be of any use to you.

Last year you came forward to oppose a veteran publicist Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath and in my opinion it redounds very much to your credit that you lost that election against him by only about a dozen votes. Rightly encouraged by the result of that contest, you came forward a second time to seek the suffrage of the University constituency against Moulvi Mohammad Hafeez. As the result (before the Commissioners who heard your election petition) has shown, you actually got in the second contest a larger number of votes than your opponent and you should have been declared elected but for an error of judgement on the part of the acting returning officer. The Commissioners however had no option under the rules but to recommend that it be declared null and void and that a fresh election should take place. This result again reflects very great credit on your courage, perseverance and tenacity of purpose. In the circumstances set forth above I had hoped that the contest would lie this time between you and Hafeez who is unchivalrous enough to enter the list against you. I have learnt however with very great regret and a deep sense of sorrow that such is not the case, and that some other person also has come forward to contest this election. Considering the trouble, worry and expenditure which you have had to undergo and incur in the matter of the election petition I must express my disapproval of the

conduct of this other person in taking what is clearly an unfair advantage of the position in which you have been placed by the declaration of a fresh election. Sympathising, therefore as I do, deeply with you in the situation thus brought about, I deprecate the attitude and conduct of your new opponent. And I have no hestitation in assuring you that in case of a contest between you and them I shall do all that I can to ensure your successful return to the Legislative Council.

With best wishes for your success.

I remain
Yours Sincerely,
"Sachidananda Sinha."

How ever I did not lose heart. I knew I would get support and so again I worked single handed. My 3rd rival being Kayastha he naturally thought he would get all Kayasthas votes and he had some promises, but he failed to get the votes whereas I knew that again Mr. Hafeez and I would run shoulder to shoulder. I could not give out the names of my voters to others to secure voters but as my 3rd rival gave out that he secured the majority of Hindu Beharee votes, some Kayasthas hesited to give me their votes so they in ignorance voted for him. After counting the votes, I found that I lost my seat by 2 votes. Hafeez had a majority whereas the 3rd man secured very few. I found that I had again strong grounds to file an election petition to set aside the election. While I was considering this question my late dear father wrote to me sympathising with me at my disappointment and asked me not to contest the seat again as it was not God's wish that I should go into the Council. Otherwise I secured the majority of votes in three elections, yet I lost my seat owing to some sort of irregularities. I listened to his advice and allowed Mr. Hafeez to be elected. This ended my exciting contest for the University constituency in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council.

(b) Lothian Commission

One winter morning in 1933 the Lothian Commission arrived in Patna to take evidence from representative people

regarding the question of Franchise. No woman in Patna took any interest in the Franchise question except myself yet the Local Government nominated a woman who had no knowledge of Franchise and could not help the Government with woman's point of view. I made up my mind to represent my views by appearing before the Lothian Committee. I sent my representation on behalf of the Council of Women and I gave an oral evidence which took half an hour. I was questioned at great length and was in favour of reservation of seats for women. I was not in favour of joint electorate, but a separate electorate for women if reservation of seat was not given. I knew educated respectable women would have no chance to contest a seat with a Congress candidate. Congress irrespective of qualification would nominate any one of their party and it would be a farce to go to the Council without taking any part in the discussion or bringing up certain measures or acts for the welfare of women and children. I knew women would have no chance with men in joint electorate. The majority of provinces wanted joint electorate. One of the members of the Commission Mrs. Subarayan was my guest. She tried to convert me to their point of view, i.e. joint electrorate, but I was not at all in favour of it and I am glad to say that the Lothian Commission gave a separate electorate to women, two seats for Orissa and Bihar Legislative Assemblies. I met all the members of the Commission and some members were entertained at a tea-party, by me where we had friendly discussions. I was asked by one of the members why I was not appointed on the Local Commitee. I said "I am sorry I cannot enlighten you. Perhaps I have my own independent views and Government would like to have a woman who would not go against their views." He said "It is a pity we cannot get in touch with women of India who have original views. It serves no purpose to put wives of Government officials on the Committee as they cannot give indepedent views."

We had great times during the stay of the Lothian Committees and Patna was gay and busy, but it was only for a

short time. One evening I went to Patna Railway Station to see off the members of the Commission and bid good-bye to them.

(c) The Indian Delimitation Committee

Sir Laurie Hammond I.C.S., K.C.S.I. was the chairman of the Delimitation Committee. He with some members expected to arrive at Ranchi in the second week of October 1935. The Secretary to the Government of Bihar and Orissa Reforms Department sent copies of questions of the Commission to all recognised associations and others but did not send any to the Council of Women and the All India Women's Conference, the two largest recognised organisations of women. At Cuttack. I was not also taken on the local committee to help the Delimitation committee with women's views and the difficulties of women with regard to the Franchise. Government appointed a wife of a Government Officer who never in her life studied the questions for women's Franchise or shown any interest in it. Non-official women not wanted. Such was the decision of the Government. As I have already said that I never take down an insult quietly and I never wish to be ignored where women's welfare questions and rights are concerned ; my readers, you will see how I made myself known to the Delimitation Committee in spite of Local Government's error to keep me out of it and how my views were accepted by the committee, though I was not present nor as a member of the committee. The local Government could not stop me and it had a lesson from me and since then I was in disgrace with the authorities. When the new province of Orissa was created, the President of the Reform Committee became the Governor and Secretary became the Chief Secretary. Naturally I was not in their favour for which I did not mind.

Now I shall tell you my story and you will be greatly amused. The Government communique regarding Delimitation of constituencies was sent some time in July and persons were asked to send their representations to the Reform Secretary before 31st of August 1935.

I wrote a letter to the Reform Secretary for a copy of the Communique which I received on the 30th of August and the Government knew that I would not be able to send my representation on the 31st of August and if it reached after that date Government would not accept it. But I had a better scheme than that of the Reform Secretary and you will know here what I did, and will be amused.

I read the communique very carefully and found that allocation of women's reserved seats in the municipalities would be unworkable by a woman candidate. As I had my own experience with regard to the working of the Franchise, it was not a difficult problem for me to write out reasonable representation which will be accepted by the Delimitation Committee and will throw a bomb-shell on the Reform Committee of the Government of Bihar and Orissa. So I addressed my letter direct to the Chairman, Delimitation Committee ignoring the Local Government altogether. Here is the letter for you to read my readers.

From

Miss S. B. Das,
Honorary Secretary,
Orissa Women's Constituent Conference Association
(All India Women's Conference Consituency).

To

Sir Laurie Hammond I. C. S., K. C. S. I.
Chairman,
Indian Delimitation Committee, Ranchi.

Sir,

I have been directed by our Association to send the following representation regarding the delimitation of Constituencies in Women's reserved seats to you.

2. The Association begs to be excused for sending the representation direct to you as an emergent measure as it received the Government comunique regarding the Delimitation

of Constituencies on the 30th August 1935. Conesquently it could not send this representation through the proper channel, *i.e.* to the Secretary, Reform Department, as it appears from the communique that all representations should reach him on or before 31st of Angust 1935.

3. This Women's Association is a constituent of the All India Women's Conference and it is a properly organised body and recognised by the Local Government. It has branches in Puri and Balasore and its number on the roll of membership is over one hundred and fifty women in the town of Cuttack only. This organisation represents the views of the progressive women in Orissa.

4. This organisation regrets that the local Government did not think it wise and prudent to appoint a progressive non-official woman to serve on the Orissa Franchise Committee but appointed a wife of a Government officer who could be trusted not to press in the Committee for views which might not have found favour with the Local Government.

5. This appointment consequently deprived the Orissa Franchise Comittee for ascertaining the views of the non-official progressive women who are really interested in Women's Franchise in the Province.

6. The Orissa Women's Association, while accepting on principle the recommendation of the local Government regarding the distribution of Constituencies of the two reserved seats for women, views with dismay the large population in Women's constituencies and feels that it will be unworkable for an efficient candidate to contest the seat.

7. This Association therefore strongly recommends the Committee that the method of election proposed by the local Government for the Legislative Assembly should be tentatively altered at least for the next ten years,

8. That two women's representatives from Orissa should be elected from two municipalities only instead of six in rotation

as to make the population in women's Constituencies smaller and workable and not prohibitively expensive.

9. This organisation of Orissa Women respectfully requests that the Committee will be so good as to consider favourably the proposal of the organisation by making the population smaller.

10. A White Paper has been issued giving His Majesty's Government's proposal for the electorate for the Council of State.

11. This organisation notices that differential qualifications are laid down for the different provinces in India for reserved seats for women in the Council of State.

12. This organisation thinks it to be a great injustice to women when wifehood has been made the essential qualification for Franchise for women and thereby efficient capable and unmarried women have been deprived of the Franchise for the Council of State, unless they are the recipients of honour or titles of His Majesty's Government.

13. This organisation of Women keenly feels that when rights are given to women in the New Constitution they should be allowed to exercise the Franchise in all Provinces if they possess the same qualifications like men voters.

14. Therefore this organisation strongly recommends to the Committee that Uniformity of Franchise qualification for the Council of State should be maintained in all Provinces and that women who have the same qualifications as men in respect of property, income tax, membership of the Legislative Council and Fellow of Universities in British India should also be given the Franchise, so that women can be voters or contest seats along with men in all Provinces for the Council of States if they so desire irrespective of reserved seats for women in six major provinces.

I have the honour to be
Sir
Your most obedient servant
Sd. S. B. Das.

On arrival at the Government House the Chairman got my representation and naturally after that representation they could not hold the meeting without having my evidence. In the Local Franchise Committee there were two women. Both of them were wives of officials and were quite ignorant about women's Franchise and Delimitation constituencies. The Chairman of Delimitation Committee asked the Reform Secretary to send me a wire. The meeting was postponed. I got the wire at midnight to send a representative so that she could reach at the appointed hour. I found nobody could reach there at that time as the train would not reach Ranchi before the afternoon. Again to suit the time I found it was impossible to reach. So to that effect I sent a wire explaining the difficulties in arriving in time. I was told by a member of the Local Franchise Committee that the Secretary of the Reform Committee and the Reform President felt most keenly when Sir Laurie Hammond and his committe found my representation was most valuable and I made the Local Goverment appear ridicilous. I shall here give you a letter to read received from the Secretary of the Delimitation Committee and I am proud to say that though the Local Government would not have me on he Local Committee, yet my views were accepted by the Delimilation Committee and so in Bihar and in Orissa, women's Constituencies were made smaller. The Lothian Committee accepted my views on reserved seats and the Hammond Committee made it workable. Here is the letter of the Indian Delimitation Committee, which will speak for itself.

No. 157/B & O—22.
Indian Delimitation Committee
Camp India.

From

J. G. Laithwaite Esquire, C. I. E.,
Secretary Indian Delimitation Committee.

To

The Honorary Secretary,
Orissa Women's Constituency Conference Association,
Madhu Smriti, Cuttack.

Madam,

I am desired by Sir Laurie Hammond to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th October and to say that the Committee much regrets that it has not been posible for you to appear to give evidence at Ranchi. The points raised by you which are to a large extent covered by the valuable representation which you have been good enough to address in writing to the Committee have however been carefully considered by the Committee in consultation with the Orissa Franchise Committee and the Local Government. The Central Committee feels that they are now fully aware of the position and they think it unnecessary in these circumstances to trouble you to come to Calcutta to give evidence. They will however be very glad to receive and consider any supplementary representation which you may desire to address to them.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your most obedient servant
Sd, J. G. Laithwaite.
Secretary.

(d) Election under new electoral roll.

Under the reform a new electoral roll was prepared. I went to Patna after the creation of the new Province of Orissa, as I found my position was intolerable here owing to the activities of some women and so I left for Patna where I was not unpopular.

One day I got a letter from Sir Ganesh to see him. On arrival he asked me to contest the Women's seat in the Patna Municipality with a Congress candidate. He would not allow me to consider. He said, "You know the ratepayers well and are popular with them, so you are the only person to contest." I wanted to refuse but then thought "Let me have the excitement of election again." When my Congress friends came and heard about it, they asked me not to stand against a Congress candidate, but I said "I have given my word to Sir Ganesh and must stick to it inspite of the difficulties." I had a name in Patna to be a first class canvasser doing nothing mean but always laid stress on facts and got my points. Here I found 24,000 voters. Daily I approached them and canvassed. Every one promised to support me. Sir Ganesh was jubilant. But alas my election Campaigm was shortlived! One day as I was sitting in a shop of a big merchant, I found a Congress man, with a Tricolour flag hoisted on a bamboo and with ringing of bells came to each shop and said "You brothers are required to give your vote for the white box that is the order of the Mahatma Gandhi." The merchant who promised his and his workmen's votes to me said "Mataji, every one in Patna city knows you and your work and they will vote for you against any one, but not against Congress. So why are you standing against the Congress and making Congres spend money, on this election. You should not ruin the Congress case so please withdraw. I found wherever I went the same remark was made. I went to Sir Ganesh and told him how the situation was. He would not believe that I would be defeated. He said "The City men would all vote for you," I said "No, they will vote for the Congress candidate." The poor man was deceived, but I knew the true situation, as the people did not deceive me I gave out for the sake of the fun, that I would engage buses, cars, ekkas,

to bring voters to the polling station. The Congress became nervous as they believed that the Congress candidate would be defeated. A great Congress leader asked me whether I had a chance and I said " I do not know." Then he said " Why waste your money. Why not withdraw, as you will never get the majority of votes ?" I said " To tell you the the truth I know it myself. I shall be defeated but even if no one casts his vote for me I am sure of one vote and that is my own, " yet I will not and cannot withdraw after having given my word to Sir Ganesh."

The great day approached and except for my own car, I did not engage a single conveyance. In my own car, by hoisting a red flag, I visited polling station after polling station. I did not engage any agent to watch my interests. I went to the last ward of the Municipality which is the seat of the Congress activities and found thousands of voters with Congress men were standing. I got down from my car, went to the voters and asked them " Will you not give me a single vote. Do you wish me to be disappointed at the time of the opening of the ballot box to see that it was empty. Yet I have done so much for you and redressed your grievances as a Municipal Commissioner ?" They said " Mother, you will get some votes from us, but the major portion will go to the Congress." I knew that I would be defeated and so I would lose my deposit money. I did not spend any money for canvassing except the petrol for my car. I enjoyed this election immensely and I gained experience. It would be impossible to defeat a Congress candidate. So no respectable lady of position could afford to contest a seat with a Congress man, for she is sure to be defeated. In my election there was nothing dirty and I had nothing to say aganst the Congress candidate. Thus the election excitement was over for me.

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CHAPTER XII

WHY I RESIGNED MY SECRETARYSHIP OF BIHAR AND ORISSA COUNCIL OF WOMEN.

After the departure of Lady Stevenson a new Governor came to occupy the Government House Gadi and his wife took the place of Lady Stevenson. Before she was elected as a President of the Council she wrote and asked me to send the drafts of all letters written by me as Secretary to her for approval. Now my readers, knowing me as you do, you can well imagine how I felt. Do you think I complied with her order ? Certainly not, as she had no right to issue such an order, when she was not even appointed as President. I was greatly amused to get her letter and replied that her election would take place at the next Committee meeting and the Council would feel honoured to have her as President. I sent her a copy of the rules, drawing her attention to the duties of the Secretary who serves the Committee and all important letters are placed before the Committee for its approval. The Governor's wife and I were never on good terms from the beginning. I will narrate an amusing incident. The Governor was paying a visit to Orissa and the Orissa Women's Council, which is a branch of the Bihar and Orissa Council, was not informed by headquarters whether the Governor's wife would come to Orissa with her husband. As we were not informed, we had no knowledge about her arrival. I was leaving Cuttack to attend a meeting of the Senate at Patna. I left instructions with the officiating Secretary at Cuttack that if the President came, and if the Committee was able to get up a party for her I had no objection. If they did this, they would have to let me know about it at Patna and I would invite the Governor's wife to the Council. It was decided to entertain her and I went to the Government House to invite her. She seemed very much displeased with me for not being invited before. After my explanation she asked me to see the Private Secretary and make up a programme in consultation with him. I was greatly amused as it was not going to be the Governor's

programme. I did as she said, and the Orissa branch entertained her.

As a President, she used to send orders and I resented this. The English ladies who were our members all helped her as I was not liked by the majority of them. I was the only person there to fight my own battles and the Secretary's task instead of being a pleasure became most irksome to me. The Secretary and President seemed always at variance.

One day I was at an Indian dinner party at which the then Chief Justice of Patna was present. He asked me how I was getting on and I told him "Not at all well, I am miserable." He said "Why don't you confess your sins?" I asked "Who will be my father Confessor?" He said "I shall and assure you I shall give you absolution." So it was decided that I should go to him next day with all files and papers in connection with the Council, open my heart to him for his advice. I took the minute book and other papers with me and placed them all before him. He went through them carefully. He wished to have documentary evidence before passing judgement and he was satisfied. He said "I find you were in trouble with the English members of your Committees. Why don't you have more Indian ladies?" I said "They do not wish to come." He remarked "Then resign." I said "I want to do that and I am glad you also agree with me." I asked him "Have I made any mistake or done anything wrong during my Secretaryship?" He said "No." Then I showed him the dozen letters which passed between me and the President. They were strong letters. He remarked "There is no one in the Province who would dare to write such letters to the Governor's wife. But she has brought it on herself. She should have known you are different from others. However, you would do well to resign now." I said "I would do it under protest." He said "No write a dignified letter" I said "It is impossible for me to do so now." I asked him whether he would go through my resignation letter and correct whatever seemed wrong to him. He said he would. I

went back to Cuttack and told my father all about it. He asked me to follow the Chief Justice's advice. I did this and wrote a simple resignation letter to the President. I sent a copy of this letter to the Chief Justice. He wrote a letter to me in reply saying "I am sure you have acted very wisely in the course you have taken which will be properly appreciated and will add to your personal dignity and reputation. I am equally sure that means will present themselves by which your active (and will you allow me to say) and attractive personality will have valuable expression in the affairs of our province, for you know "Our Shoila Bala" is much loved. Thus ended my career as Secretary of the Bihar and Orissa Council Women and I was glad to get out of it for it was impossible to work much in an atmosphere where jealousy and malice were prevalent.

PART IV

RETURN TO CUTTACK

PART IV

CHAPTER I

" RETURN TO CUTTACK '

(a) Mahatma Gandhi's Visit to Cuttack.

IN the winter of.1927 I came from Patna to Cuttack. My late father Madhusudan Das' house was to be sold by auction. He was ruined owing to his several industrial enterprises. As there was no one to help him he incurred debts for which his houses had to be sold, to meet his liabilities to the Maharaja of Parlakimedi,

Just at this time the local leaders of the Congress came to my father to request him to accommodate Mahatma Gandhi and his staff at our house. They knew my father's financial trouble but they did not hesitate to put a new responsibility on his shoulders. My father's nature was such that he would spend his last pice for others, sacrificing himself for the cause of the country. But the Congress men never did anything to appreciate his work. My father gladly agreed to have him as his guest.

My father went to Ahmedabad in 1924 to seek help from Mahatmaji for his industrial development. He promised to do something for him but he could not do it. Had he been able to help my late father, he would not have gone to his grave a disappointed man. Gandhiji knew his troubles, but he was not able to help him. When he was our guest I was asked by my father to accompany Mahatmaji everywhere, which I gladly did. It was arranged that Gandhiji would address the women of the town. I accompanied him to the meeting at the Town Hall at Cuttack. In those days, there were not many Congress ladies in Cuttack, nor were they financially well of, as they are now under the National Government. Very few ladies attended the meeting. Gandhiji sat on a table and spoke to them for about 15 minutes. The ladies put their *pranam* before him for Darshan. The collection was about Rs. 60. Seeing the small

amount given by the Cuttack ladies he was disappointed. I wanted to speak to him but restrained myself, though I knew most of the ladies were not well off. They had paid what they could.

That night my father, Mahatmaji, his Secretary and some others were sitting on a carpet in our drawing room and talking. I was also present there. Mahatma addressed me and said "I came specially to Cuttack as your guest, for I want a favour from you." We looked the surprise we felt. Then I said "I will certainly do what you want me to do, if I am able." He said "In Patna, in Calcutta and even at Cuttack those who know you have told me that you are the person who can help me, so I want your help." I said "I am much honoured because of your confidence in my ability, but I am sorry I cannot give you my promise until I know the nature of the work and of my ability to do it." But he was adamant and said he was sure I could do it for him. He said "I want you to take up Charka and introduce it to the ladies of Orissa." With folded hands I begged him to excuse me as I would not be able to make it a success. He asked "Why can you not make it a success, when everyone says you can." I answered "Unless I put my whole heart and soul into the work I cannot make it a success." He asked "Don't you believe in Charka." I said "No, the Charka will never bring salvation to India or solve its economic problems. But it is good for the cultivators. They can grow cotton in their own fields, and can make their own dhoties sarees and gamchas. But the middle and rich classes will never take to it." Then he asked me again "If you do not believe in Charka why are you wearing a Khaddar Shari?" I replied "You are our honoured guest. I do not wish to appear before. you in any Shari which will be repugnant to your eyes." He asked "Am I to understand that you will discard Khaddar as soon as I leave your house?" I said "Yes." He kept quiet for a minute or two. Everyone present was surprised at my boldness. Then Gandniji said again "Very well, now I shall ask from you another favour will you do it?" I

said "Unless I know what it is, it is difficult for me to say whether I shall do it or not. I cannot deceive you by saying I shall do a thing which I never intend doing." He then stretched his hands and said "Give me all your sarees." I said "Please excuse me, I am sorry to refuse you again. For I know you will burn all my sarees. I do not wish to make a bonfire of my saries. They have not hurt me and my lifelong policy is "Waste not want not." He said "I shall give you a dozen fine Bezwada Saries every year as long as I live." I said "I am sorry the proposal does not tempt me. If you are so anxious not to use foreign things why are you using motor cars, medicine and watches etc. They should be discarded by you. But under the present circumstances we cannot do so." Gandhiji did not like my answers. He said, "In ancient India a host and hostess would give anything to a guest and you cannot give your Saries to me." I said "We are not in ancient India, our ideas have changed under British rule and we have adapted ourselves accordingly. We are used to so many things that we would find it difficult to give them up. If you want me not to buy any foreign things I am willing to promise." Gandhiji did not appreciate my remarks. He turned to my father and said "You hear, how your daughter talked to me." Then he addressed me and said "I want you to become a member of the Congress." I said "I shall be pleased to become a Congress woman when I shall believe in Congressmen and Congress policy. I shall let you know and come to your Ashram at Sabarmati." I asked him to pardon my bold remarks. He left our house the next evening saying that I should be welcome to his Ashram, whenever I come but I never had the pleasure and honour of being his guest at his Ashram.

CHAPTER II

TRAGEDY OF ORISSA COUNCIL OR WOMEN

As my father desired me to live in Cuttack after his death, I wound up all my activities in Patna and came back to Orissa to please him. The province of Orissa was created in 1936, so we were separated from Bihar. The Orissa Council of Women was a branch of the Bihar and Orissa Council which was started by me. I wrote a letter to the Secretary of the N.C.W.I. explaining our situation by the creation of the new Province. I sought her advice with regard to the Branch Council. She wrote me officially instructing me to wind up the Branch Council and inaugarate a new Provincial Council. I was authorised to do this. My lady friends of Orissa had different views. They thought the interests of Orissa women would suffer if I, a Bengali woman, was made the Secretary, though I am the daughter of Madhusudan Das. I regret to say that these ladies suffered from a feeling of inferiority complex to such an extend that they themselves could do nothing, nor would they suffer another to do it. The wife of the Governor and the wives of other Government officials supported them. I wrote a letter to the Governor's wife as instructed by the Central Body, to honour the Provincial Council by becoming its President. She did not reply to my letter. Then I called a meeting of the Executive Committee of the old Orissa Council to discuss about the winding up of the Branch and about the Fund at our disposal and several other matters. They did not attend the meeting, but sent in their resignations saying I had no right to call a meeting of the Executive Committee (though I was the Secretary), the Governor's wife only had the right to call a meeting. They did not realise that unless and until the Governor's wife was elected as President, she could not act as she had no locus standi. My lady friends canvassed and made the members send in their resignations and so 120 members out of 150 resigned.

I saw the new Governor's wife. She asked me "Who has the right to call a meeting of the Committee?" I

answered, "The Honorary Secretary and not the President." "Is that your rule" she asked. I said "Yes." She said "I wish you had more work and less rules." I replied "I am glad that we have rules for calling a meeting, otherwise the Governor's wife would have usurped the right of the Secretary." She was silent for a moment and then said "I do not think I can be the President of your new Council." I told her if she became the President I would not continue to be the Secretary and so she would have no trouble from me. She knew me well in Patna as she was a member of the Bihar and Orissa Council and I was the Secretary and she found me too strong and and an efficient worker. After some discussions she said she would consider and let me know. After two or three days she invited all the members of the Committee of the Orissa Council to the Government House. At this meeting she said she had written to the Central Body asking what right Miss Das had to call a meeting of the Council and whether she or I was the proper person to do it. The reply had come and it said that I and not her was the proper person to do it. She then said that she had prayerfully considered the question and had decided not to become the President of the Council. I asked her why she had decided like this when I had assured her I would not be there to oppose her. "Is it simply because your prestige has been lowered by that letter from the Central Body. If so, it is not worthy of a woman in your position." I told her then I was going to inform the Central and other Bodies about this and would never see her again, unless she herself came to me or sent for me. So saying I left the meeting and I left Cuttack and came back to Patna once again.

Thus the Orissa Council of Women though existing in name did really no real work after that. A few months after this I got a letter from the Secretary of the Governor in which he said the money which I had in the Bank belonging to the

Orissa Council, should be made over to the Governor's wife as she has asked for it to start social work. I was very much amused to get this letter and in reply I said that I was only a custodian of the fund and though the Orissa Council was not functioning it was still in existence. Therefore the question of my giving the money to the Governor's wife did not arise. I got a letter from the Governor's wife in which she quoted a text from the Bible, which, said if I suffered and was punished for my own fault, I had no complaint to make. But if I suffered for the fault of others, my reward would come later. I thanked her for quoting the text from the Bible and said I felt sure I would get my reward and told her I regretted very much that through her activities the Council was almost dead. She was a religious woman and perhaps her conscience pricked her for her treatment of me. As long as she was the Governor's wife I did not come to Cuttack, but in 1941 I got very ill and was taken to the Nursing Home in Cuttack on very short notice and had to undergo two major operations. My condition was serious. I learnt from Major O'Neil, who was attending on me, that there was daily enquiry from Government House about my state of health and the Governor's wife had expressed a wish to see me. One morning she came to see me with a large bouquet of carnations and expressed regret and asked me to forgive her, which I did. I gave her the money belonging to the Council and closed the Council for good. Some of the women who were ringleaders in this affair are even now opposed to introduce the name of Orissa Council of Women. Thus a new association was formed under the name of Orissa Nari Sangha which was duly affiliated to the National Council of Women.

CHAPTER III

MY ACTIVITIES FOR THE SOCIAL WELFARE OF WOMEN IN CUTTACK

Maternity and Child Welfare Centre :—

This work was originally started by the Red Cross under the Presidentship of the Civil Surgeon. Afterwards the Government of Orissa helped by giving a grant and the Red Cross stopped its financial help. In 1941 the Committee started the building for the Centre but could not finish it for want of funds. There was no Secretary so the Civil Surgeon approached me to take up the work of the Secretary and in 1942 I took the work up and immediately raised some funds to finish the work. Government came to my aid in this generously. I had the building opened by the new Governor's wife in May 1942. I reshuffled the Committee. Rules were made and passed. Paying membership was introduced and the list of subscribers went up from about 10 to about 80. A few sub-centres were created. I was never disappointed when I approached Government for funds. I got a plot of land from Government to construct a new building for the Maternity Ward and Childrens' Welfare Centre. The members took great interest in the work. During war time we fed 130 women and children with one meal per day for three months. Lady Wavel, the then Viceroy's wife came to visit the centre and saw the feeding of the children. She was so pleased that she presented a huge Frigidiare which I was obliged to lend to the Cuttack Hospital for the Female ward as it was not needed by the Centre. The Governor's wife helped us with a lot of Sharis and Kurtas made at the work party in Government House. These she herself distributed to the women and children. Here I shall narrate an incident which shows how the Governor's wife resented the least criticism of Government. At an Annual General Meeting of the Maternity Centre, under the presidentship of the Governor's wife when the Budget was being discussed, I pointed out that our deficit budget was due to the very high charge of the P.W.D. and remarked "You all know that the P.W.D. charges 50 p.c. more than others." The

next day when I went to her as she was our President, I found she was annoyed with me. She asked me "What possessed you to bring discredit to my husband's Government, Do you know you can be prosecuted." I was amazed not knowing my offence and the cause of her displeasure. I looked at her surprised and said "What have I done to deserve this? She said "You remarked at the meeting yesterday that the P.W.D. charge, 50 per cent more others and this is defamation." I replied "With due respect to you I must say you do not understand the P.W.D. charge 50 per cent more than others?" She remarked "Again you are saying it in my presence, I shall be glad to accept your resignation." I said "But I have no desire to send in my resignation to you, but if you insist please call a Special General Meeting which you have a right to do and I shall tender my resignation there with my statement." She asked me "Is this necessary. I said "Yes, as I am not appointed by you but by the General Committee." She was amazed at my daring. Just at this moment H.E. The Governor came into the room and seeing us he remarked "I see you are exchanging confidences and I am leaving." I said "Your Excellency please do come and rescue me from your wife for she is very angry with me and she has asked me to resign my Secretaryship of the Maternity centre and I have refused. He laughed and remarked." "It is the best thing you could have done and we became the best of friends."

When another Governor and his wife (Indian) came, she took great care in the Centre and also wished that we should have a good building. She helped the Centre with Rs. 13,500 for building purposes. Had she been with us longer she would have helped more. But India became Independent and she had to leave.

Later on, my health became very bad and I had to leave Cuttack frequently. So I gave up my Secretaryship and I found that some members instead of being grateful for my past services were glad to have me away, so that they might do what they liked.

But as organised the whole thing had collected a large sum of money at a General Meeting I became the Organising Secretary. In 1952 I invited the Union Health Minister to visit the Centre and at a meeting I explained my difficulty in getting money from the present Government for building purposes she announced that she would give Rs. 20,000 and the Chief Minister promised another Rs. 30,000. So by criticising Government and placing our difficulties before the meeting I raised Rs. 60,000. A new two-storied building has been constructed which is called Madhusudan Matrumangal and Sisu Kalyan Samity.

We are experiencing great difficulty in not getting our legitimate grants for Maternity Ward and the Children's Welfare Centre for which representation after representation is being made to Government.

CHAPTFR IV

A.R.P. WORK

When the Great War was raging, the Governor's wife being President of the All Women's Organisation started A.R.P. worked and I was made the Secretary. I formed a Committee of 50 members and the whole town of Cuttack was divided into 5 divisions, with three members to work in each division. They had instructions to go into all the houses and teach the women what precautions they must take in case of an Air Raid. All of us did good work and visited more than half the houses in the town. The Member at the Centre in charge of A.R.P. work came with his Secretary to find out what our Government had done about Air Raid Precaution. We women were asked to give a report of our work to the Hon. Member. Our meeting was held at the Government House. The Hon. Member and his Secretary were there. I took a group of 3 or 4 members with me and introduced them to him. He started

asking them questions. No lady member would answer him anything, so I had to answer all his questions. He asked me "Did you take your Ward Commissioner with you while visiting the houses." I said "No, for we do not know who is our Ward Commissioner." The Governor's wife did not like my answer and asked me not to say anything further. I then introduced the ladies to the Secretary. He also asked the same question and I gave the same answer. The Governor's wife came and sat on the floor near my couch. I got up and gave her my seat, but she was so angry with me she would not take it. On the contrary she remarked angrily "If you again ask me to take your seat I will leave the room."

After the meeting was over, the Governor's wife asked me to come and see her the next day. When I went and saw her she asked me "How dare you tell the Hon. Member that you took no Ward Commissioner with you, for it has brought discredit on my husband's Government. They were so pleased with it before." I was so amazed at her attitude and tone that I almost resigned my Secretaryship. But again the Governor came into the room and finding his wife's attitude he asked me what was the matter. I told him what had happened and asked him "What should have been my answer under the circumstances." He said my answer was quite alright and told his wife that I did no wrong. Peace was then restored among us.

A training class was opened for the ladies to learn their duties in connection with A.R.P. We arranged several Cinema shows to teach the ladies what they were required to do during an Air Raid.

We arranged for lectures to be delivered in the villages on this subject and found that these were greatly appreciated by the villagers who learnt much from them.

CHAPTER V

SHARI PARTY

I wanted to entertain the Governor's wife who was the President of our Women's organisations. I worked with her for five years and came in close contact with her. I often had the misfortune to differ from her views, but we always settled our difficulties and become friends again.

I decided to call my party a "Shari Party" for I wanted the Governor's wife to be dressed in a Shari and attend the party thus arranged. She was delighted with the idea and accepted by invitation. We had great excitment in the selection of a Benares tissue Shari. Even the H.E. was consulted abont it. It was decided that all European ladies who were her associates and her other friends would be suitably diessed in a Shari, for in Shari Party all must wear Sharies. The great day arrived. Each of my reception rooms were decorated with a different colour scheme and little electric lights twinkling from all green foliage gave the place a fairy-like appearance. English, Bengali, Oriya, Punjabi ladies were all there and they were all delighted with the arrangement. Games were provided and there was dancing by ladies and little girls which was greatly liked. Then came the sumptuous supper which was not the least part of the attractions.

The next day a photo of the Governor's wife in her Indian dress was taken. I presented her with a copy of this photo. Another copy was presented to H.E. requesting him to accept my gift of an Indian Rani to him and told him to be always good to his Indian Rani. He smilingly replied "Certainly, it goes without saying." The Shari Party was Madhu Smriti—I gave the party on the ever of her departure. She had a short temper but good heart and I liked her. She was the last English Governor's wife.

CHAPTER VI

ORISSA NARI SEVA SANGHA

After the creation of the new province of Orissa through the mischievous machininations and jealousy of some members, the Orissa Council of Women received a death blow at the hands of the First Governor's wife. I was not dissappointed but I was pained to see that some of our educated women of Orissa could lower themselves so much as to go from house to house canvassing that they should resign. The wives of the Government Officers to please the Governor's wife all resigned.

I left Cuttack and returned to Patna and plunged myself again into various activities. In the meantime some of the ladies at Cuttack, with the help of the new Governor's wife started a Women's League, which is now called Nari Seva Sangha. I took no part in it and was not even a member of this Sangha. But when I returned to Cuttack in 1941, forgetting all the unkindness, I received from the members I presented a portrait of Lady Hubback, who was President of the Women's League to the Nari Seva Sangha Hall. This portrait was unveiled by Lady Lewis, her successor. I became a member of the Sangha. So long as Lady Lewis was the President, the members did some work and took some interest in the Sangha. But since the independence of India, the women of this province did not take much interest in social work. Nari Seva Sangha existed only in name at that time. This Hall is constantly let out to the public and Government for various functions. It is a beautiful hall, women should be proud to possess it and carry on their social work and make it the Centre of their activities. But alas such women are rare in Cuttack. If anyone tries to do any good work she is criticised and abused behind her back. I understand such is the case in every State.

Lady Trivedi when she came to Cuttack, being the wife of the third Governor of Orissa took great interest in Women's Organisations. Under her instruction I started the Ladies Club. It functioned for a few months, but when she left Cuttack the Club ceased to exist. Since then we had two Governors of Orissa

but no lady had come forward to give a lead. The Rani Sahiba of Durpan is now the President of the Sangha, but she cannot make the members take much active interest for the nation-building work.

I wanted to start village work and collected nearly Rs. 2,000/- and Government promised to help with funds and conveyance but where are the workers? Twice we visited a village, made schemes to carry on the village work but owing to my illness I resigned and handed over the money to the Nari Seva Sangha to carry on village work.

Finding that the Nari Seva Sangha is not well lighted I approached the then Chief Minister, Sri Hare Krishna Mahatab to electrify the Nari Seva Sangha in the modern fashion. He sanctioned nearly Rs. 4,000/- to have it properly electrified and the Sadan is beautifull lighted now. Many new ladies are now members in place of the old ones. They are mostly the wives of the Indian officials. So they are the birds of passage and one cannot expect them to take the same interest as the ladies of Cuttack. Mrs. Sundaram, the wife of a Public Service Commissioner is now the Secretary and is taking a great deal of interest. The Sangha has got quite a decent sum in the Bank and if the members take an interest they can start Social Work and get help from the Central Social Welfare Board.

CHAPTER VII

HIGH-HANDEDNESS OF POLICE

As soon as India got Independence, every province in India was jubilant. Great excitement and entertainment took place in every State. Cuttack had its share. A great theatrical entertainment took place. A day or two after the declaration, all the high officials, the Governor and ladies and gentlemen went to a theatrical entertainment which was specially staged

for the occasion. Every one had to buy a ticket and I also bought a ticket. Half an hour before the theatre was over I came out of the room as I was not feeling well and entered my car which was parked at a distance. The constable who was in charge of the traffic told the driver to stop the car. I asked the constable what was the matter, he said " Unless the Governor leaves, no car can leave the park" and that was the order given to him. I told my driver to start the car and leave the place. But two constables from two sides stood in front of the car. I was furious and told the constables by opening the door of the car that I would go straight to the Governor and ask him by whose order I was made a prisoner in my own car. Seeing me getting down from the car one of the constables ran to his officer to report and after his return he asked the driver to start the car. I asked the constable to give his name and number, but these he refused to give. Next day I wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary mentioning the incident and asking him to find out by whose order the car was stopped and why? The Police were high-handed under British bureaucracy but who should they behave in such a manner when we are independent ? So I asked him to enquire and take proper action. The Chief Secretary sent this letter to the I.G. of Police and asked him to send his report. After a few days I received a letter of apology from the I.G. who said that the report which I sent was correct and that this would never happen again. The Chief Secretary also wrote to me that action had been taken and the police had been warned. The police were getting more and more high-handed and harrassed the public because the public quietly bore with their high-handness and never took any action. I believe that the Government in those days were quite efficient and if a person approached with a grievance it was looked after. But now we do not know to whom to approach when we suffer wrong.

CHAPTER VIII

VISIT OF SOME CONGRESS LEADERS AND THE VICEROY IN CUTTACK

After the Independence of India some of the Congress Great Leaders were appointed in the Government of India by their own party, Sardar Ballavbai Patel was one of them. He came to visit Cuttack, though Orissa was a poor Province, yet one could not have thought or felt that Orissa was lacking in making a great demonstration in welcoming Sardar Patel. But it was decided otherwise by heaven. The streets from the Bund of Kathjuri river to the residence of the Prime Minister in the Fort were decorated with thin bamboos whitewashed and with Debdaru leaves and coloured paper festoons. The rain drenched them thoroughly. It seemed that nature was crying while the people were rejoicing. At State cost a big Garden Party was arranged. Having come to power the Congress authorities had much money at their disposal to welcome a guest from the Centre. Big preparations were made, garlands shamianas, flowers and everything were all there to welcome the Chief Guest. The main table where the Sardarji would sit was laden with delicacies. Nearly 500 people were invited. I was one of them. Just at the nick of time, when guests were arriving the heaven opened its doors and torrents of rain showered blessing. The whole place was full of water. On the main table where all the delicacies were placed, I saw some bathtubs, were placed to hold water, as the shamiana was leaking badly. Not a single dry seat could be found. However heaven taking pity on us poor mortals considerably lessened the rain and we could sit on wet chairs and enjoyed our tea as best as we could. After tea, H. E. Dr. Katju, the then Governor of Orissa introduced me to the Chief Guest by saying " She is the daughter of the maker of this Province, Sri Madhusudan." Hearing this the Sardarji extended his hand to me and I salaméd to him.

Visit of Lord and Lady Mountbatten :

Orissa was very proud to be visited by the last Governor-General of India. To welcome him grand entertainments were

organised. Nearly 1000 people were asked to the Garden Party at the cost of the State. It was rumoured that a large sum was spent. At this Tea Party the Premier, Sri Harakrushna Mahatab paid me a great honour by placing me next to the Viceroy, introducing me as the daughter of Sri Madhusudan, the father of Oriya Nationalism and the Maker of the New Province. His Excellency then turned towards me and said "You are then the sister of the Province and I am glad to have met you." It is my bad habit to joke with one and all. So I looked at a Minister sitting five places away from me, I called out his name, and asked him whether he had heard what His Excellency had said. He replied "No, tell us" I said, "He calls me the sister of the province, so you are all my brothers, as I am the eldest sister you are to carry out my orders and administer this province well." Then I turned to the Viceory asked him "Am I not right Your Excellency." He laughed and said "Yes." Thus ended the pleasant function. There was a Dinner Party in the Govt. House and about 100 people were invited. We all enjoyed a grand dinner at the cost of the State and had a good time with Lady Mountbatten.

(b) The Prime Minister's Visit:—

All the Congress Leaders when they visit Orissa cause great expense to the State. The Government has to entertain them. When Prime Minister, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru came, there was a Garden Party in the Government House. The Chief Minister entertained him at a Dinner Party at State cost. The Shamiana was beautifully decorated by artists brought from Calcutta. Fireworks and theatricals caused people to criticise the Government. Saying "why this waste of money when people have no food and no clothes. Life was getting harder and when essential requirements could not be procured under the Ramraja, what then would be the condition under the Rakshasraj?" Under the National Government pomp and luxury are rampant. One Province vies with an other Province in this matter. But who is there to control.

The Father of the Nation was no more, but his disciples instead of following the leader brought discredit to his creed. I had a talk with a Governor of my Province on this subject. He observed "It is necessary to show that we are not a backward Province." But at what cost!

(d) Second visit of Sardarji:—

I came, I saw and I conquered. This visit was political and most important. It made Orissa one whole. All the Feudatory States of Orissa, numbering 26, were merged with Orissa proper and came under the National Government. No doubt it was a happy day for Orissa, but a great calamity for the Chiefs. They were all taken unawares at a Government House meeting. Here Sardarji presided and his Secretary, Sri Menon gave a printed paper to each of the Chiefs present there by special invitation. They never dreamed that their States and everything they would lose at one stroke. They signed away their birthrights to the National Government. They were too secure in that princely heritage under the Britishraj who pampered them much that they never even dreamed that they would be bereft of all but allowances and a so-called few privileges. They were simply staggered when they saw the paper and were dumbfounded. But one of the youngest Chiefs stood up to protest but he was made to sit down by the iron gesture of Sardarjee. They had to be present, they were sacrificing their beloved heritage for the good of the State. Thus all the Feudatory States of Orissa came under the National Government except two States and Orissa became a great State, my father's dream was realised. During the evening the Chiefs signed away their States and then they attended the great Banquet which was held at Government House to console them. How long the Chiefs will enjoy their privileges, as they are now enjoying the citizenship of India, their princely allowances should be stopped that is the cry of the people.

CHAPTER IX

GOVERNMENT'S REQUISITION OF HOUSES

Dr. P. C. Banerji's House:

One day my friend Miss P. N. Shome who was staying with me at Cuttack got a wire from one Dr. Banerji of Calcutta, who had a house at Puri and was staying there, that his house at Puri was requisitioned by Government and he was asked to vacate the house within a fortnight. No appeal to the Magistrate was of avail. He was ill and he could not shift. But the Magistrate was adamant. My friend showed me the telegram and the letter and asked me if I could do something to help him. I took the wire from her and went to a party in the Government House. After tea I went to the Chief Secretary and asked him who had ordered the requisition of Dr. Banerji's house. He said "It was my order, but why?" I told him that his District Magistrate was a heartless man, he should have human District Magistrate and the present District Magistrate should be suspended or transferred. The man had no discretion. I narrated Dr. Banerji's case and asked him to suspend the order. also told him that our Government should not harrass a Bengali and put him in trouble. He asked me would it please me if he derequisitioned the house. I said Dr. Banerji's prayer should be granted. He passed the order. Dr. Banerji's house was derequisitioned and he was allowed to stay in his own house.

Dr. Banerji's case was not over here. I paid him a short visit at Puri and then the old man told me his troubles. Just in front of his house facing the sea a long narrow pucca house was built by the Military during their period of occupation thus obstructing his passage to sea side. This house was sold at an auction to the then Superintendent of Police of Puri. He had also taken lease of the land where the building was standing. Dr. Banerji wanted the house to be dismantled as it should have been, because that land was on Khasmahal land (a public road). Poor Dr. Banerji fought hard to have the house dismantled. But all his efforts failed so far. Then I appeared on the scene. I found out under the Government

rule the Government officials had no power to lease out any Government land without special sanction. I pointed this out to the Chief Secretary who after going through the whole case was convinced that a great injustice had been done to Dr. Banerji. So the Government cancelled the lease and also passed an order to dismantle the building. This order was left to the Deputy Revenue Commissioner who called both parties but instead of communicating the order of Government he started de novo trial. Poor Dr. Banerji in his illness had to come to Cuttack, again at Puri and this way he was greatly harassed, by the officer. My help was sought for and I again took active part and made the officer to communicate the order to both the parties at that sitting. This I could do only because we had a strong and able Chief Minister, Sri Harekrushna Mahatab and an efficient Chief Secretary Mr. B. C. Mookherjee, I.C.S. I had been able to redress the grievances of many people who came to me simply because we had efficient and just men at the helm. But what a difference now it is. Even the cry of the people is not heard by those who are in power.

CHAPTER X

N.C.W.I. BIENNIAL CONFERENCE AT CUTTACK

In November 1947 the Indian National Council of Women wanted to have their Biennial Conference at Cuttack. The Orissa Council which is known as Nari Seva Sangha refused twice to hold the Biennial Conference at Cuttack. But Lady Trivedy, wife of the then Governor of Orissa, who was the President of the Sangha agreed to hold the Conference at Cuttack as she did not like to refuse a third time. India became independent in August, 1947 and Sir Chandulal Trivedy was transferred to East Punjab. We were without a President and felt like a rudderless ship as Lady Trivedy had undertaken to meet all difficulties. The difficulties were many :—financial and accomodation and entertainment problems. We the members of the Nari Seva Sangha were at last obliged to have the Conference at Cuttack. We held many discussions about electing a Chairman of the Reception Committee. Some of the Oriya ladies without

experience and ability wanted to have the honour of becoming a Chairman. The reason was that as the Conference would be held at Cuttack an Oriya lady should be the Chairman, but others who knew about the difficulties of organising a show had me elected as Chairman so that I might shoulder the burden. I formed several sub-committees and assigned their duties. But raising the money and finding accommodation, the two most difficult tasks I kept for myself. I went to see the first National Governor Dr. Katju and sought his advice. I told him that with the departure of Lady Trivedy the mantle had fallen on his shoulder. Readily he consented to give his help and promised to keep the President and some other ladies in the Government House and to give a Tea Party to the delegates and ladies of the Conference. Being successful with the Governor I went and saw the Premier, Sri Harekrushna Mahatab at the Cuttack Secretariat and asked for a grant of Rs. 4,000/-. He said Government would gladly give Rs. 500/- for holding the Conference and entertaining the delegates. I refused to take it. He asked me, " What sum do you require" ? I said "Nothing less than Rs. 4,000/-." I also remarked that if Government could sanction Rs. 4,000/- for the expenses of a few members of the University delegates for 2 days, did he think that it was too much for 50 delegates for 7 days to be entertained by sanctioning Rs. 4,000/-? He enquired about our programme. I told him plainly if Government felt that this money would be wasted on a women's social and educational Conference to be held for the first time in Cuttack, he certainly need not sanction the money and I would cancel the Conference being held in Cuttack by sending a wire to the President that the Orissa Government have no sympathy with the women's movement. He laughed and said " Do not send the wire, the money shall be paid to you." He gave a beautiful house for the delegates and invited them to a grand dinner party. He told the Chief Secretary to help us whenever we wanted his help. We raised Rs. 2,000/- from the members of the Reception Committee. All our preparations for the comforts of the delegates were greatly appreciated. On the opening day of the Conference

the Governor presided. Nari Seva Sangha was packed with officials and non-officials and the members of the Reception Committee. The Chairman's address was appreciated. Meetings were well conducted and everyday the delegates were entertained. The members of the different sub-committees did their work well. This enjoyable function came to an end with success and the delegates departed.

Here I must thank our Premier, Sri Harekrushna Mahatab for the success of the Biennial Conference in Cuttack. The delegates were surprised to find that our Chief Minister was so sympathetic to the women's movement and gave a sumptuous feast. I do not think that any other State would sanction Rs. 4,000/- for the entertainment of the delegates for holding Women's Conference in the State.

CHAPTER XI

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND ITS TRAGEDY

When the Constituent Assembly was first formed every Province had its quota of members for the Assembly. Provincial Assemblies would elect the candidates for the Constituent Assembly. Orissa had her quota of 9 members. Non-Congress candidates had no chance of being elected as the majority of Assembly memembers were Congressmen and they would vote according to the directions of the leader of the Congress Party.

I wrote to the Chief Minister that a seat should be given to a woman. After great discussion a seat was allotted to a woman. I went to the then President of the Congress Provincial Committee and asked her opinion whether I had any chance if I stood for it. She and her husband, who was a Minister told me that she would not stand and I had every chance of being elected. Moreover I should not worry as the voters were all Congress men. Again I asked the President if

she would not like to stand and she emphatically said "No. I asked her husband to get a nomination form for me and get it proposed and seconded by two members of the Assembly as I did not know them. He seconded my name and sent the nomination paper to me and asked me to get it proposed by the leader of the Oppsition, the Raja of Kanika. He proposed my name. I then took the paper and went to see the President asking her once again whether she would like to stand as a candidate, for if so I would not file my nomination paper. She emphatically said again " No, why do you question my assertion. I have given you my word so go and file your nomination paper."

Somehow I felt that something would happen and I would not be returned, I had premonition. However I filled my nomination paper. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon I received a letter from the husband of the President that his wife had filed her nomination paper after I had filed mine. I could hardly believe it when I read this. But I did not withdraw my nomination paper as I wanted to see what the majority party would do for the minority party. The Provincial Congress President was elected. So you see my gentle readers that after this I could not entertain good feelings for the Congress or my State committee. If one cannot rspect his or her word he or she cannot expect to be respected by others. Is it not a fact? You will see how I was treated in a future election.

CHAPTER XII

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

Under the New Act of the Government of India double seatlrs in the Constituent Assembly had to vacate their seats. Constituent Assembly came in place of the Parliament. In my province five members of the Constituent Assembly had to resign and 5 persons had to be elected in their place. I did not take any interest in the beginning knowing full well that the Utkal Congress Committee would not deal fairly by me. The Chief Minister, told me that he would also help me to go to Parliament and I thought they would rectify the wrong done to me in the past. Some of the Congress Assembly members also told me that they would follow the direction of the leader of the Congress Assembly party, so after this every one thought that I would be elected. I paid the Nomination fee of Rs. 100 and signed the Congress creed. This I did, knowing well that I would never go and take part in any active field. I was very ill. I was told by an eminent doctor of Calcutta that all my activities should stop if I would like to prolong my life. In spite of this I paid the Nomination fee to the leader of the Congress Assembly party to see what would happen. But again I did not get a single vote. Though I was assured by some members and Ministers that I would get some votes, I saw from the list that I had got no votes from anyone. You can easily imagine my feelings when treated like this by men placed in high positions. I sent my statements to the Prime Minister of India reported the whole matter and said that if we women became anti-Congress would he blame us ? He sent my letter to the Chief Minister of Orissa asking him to take action immediately. But what action could he take when the election was over. Now my readers what do you think about it ?

CHAPTER XIII

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

During the cold weather of 1949 Dr. S. Radhakrishna came to hold the University Commission. I was asked by the Vice-Chancellor to give evidence before the Commission. When I approached Dr. Radhakrishna two or three other persons were present. The Vice-Chancellor was also present. Dr. Radhakrishna asked me "How is it that Women's Movement is very slow in your Province, I am told you are a fighter, why can't you create a precedent here ?" I replied "That no amount of fighting with our National Government can make a woman to create a precedent. In the National Government, non-Congress women have no chance." He said "Still fight and create a precedent." I said "I shall try."

In January 1949 the Premier of Orissa feeling that a great wrong had been done to me by keeping me aloof from all public activities, told me that within two or three months he would put me in a most conspicuous place. I could hardly believe my ears as I felt the National Government would not do anything for me. In march we learnt that the Joint Public Service Commission of Bihar and Orissa would be separated. Orissa would have its own Public Service Commission. Suddenly it struck me that I would like to create a precedent for women. As the thought came to me I acted on the impulse. I went to the Chief Secretary and asked him "Could a woman become a member of this Commission ?" He said "Certainly but where is the woman ? I asked him "What about myself ?" He said "You can be, but would you really care to work." I said "Yes, just to create a precedent," Then he asked me to write a letter to the Premier to that effect.

Next day I asked him whether he had delivered the letter to the Premier, and what did the Premier say. He said the Premier would consider the matter. I went to the Premier the next day and asked him whether he would have me as a member

of the Commission. He told me that he would speak to me after his return from Delhi. After his departure I learnt that the members have been appointed. I was greatly disappointed. After his return I wrote to him that I was greatly disappointed as I believed he would make me a member of the Commission. The Premier sent a reply immediately giving a long explanation and again assuring me that he would correct my impression of him, and that he is the most dependable person and I shall find this out in future.

After a year or so when I talked to H.E. of Orissa about this, he told me that Prime Minister was really in difficulty. He wanted to have me on the Commission but having appointed a Christian as a President the could not have another Christian in the Commission consisting of 3 members only. I said "Why then was I made to hope for it? He only smiled. I liked this Governor very much. He used to call me sister and as I always called a spade a spade, he liked talking to me. He told me that he would give me his steno and I must talk as I talked to him as it would be quite interesting to read. He also advised me to write out all my experiences. Now when I am following his advice, he is no more. I felt his death keenly as I felt I have really lost a brother.

PART V

IMPRESSIONS OF MEN AND THINGS IN MY LATER LIFE

PART V

CHAPTER I

IMPRESSION OF MEN AND THINGS IN MY LATER LIFE

My impression of Cuttack as a young girl and in later life.

WHEN I first came to Cuttack with my parents in 1890 I thought it was the most beautiful spot I had ever seen in life. The Garjat hills in the North and West the big river Mahanadi and its branch Kathjuri surrounding Cuttack like an island, seemed to me something unique. Coming straight from Calcutta the scenery pleased my eyes and seemed most attractive to me. I used to go with my father to the house of his friends—most of whom were domiciled Bengalis and some Oriyas. I found these people were simple honest and religious. Though they had not western education and culture they were renowned for their eastern qualification—hospitability. Hardly any Oriyas held high posts those days. There was no consciousness of political, national, social or civic ideas. Women were also simple in their ways and habits. They knew nothing outside their homes and were conservative to the bone. There was hardly any education among them though the majority were literate. Girls above ten were considered to be marriageable and early marriage was prevalent. Their dress and ornaments were very different from Bengalis. Except Christian girls, others wore only one sari above their ankles. Heavy ornaments adorned their wrists, ankles, neck and ears. They were free from social and political jealousies. Simple living and food were quite different from what they are now. Missionaries were the pioneers of girls education in those days, but the education was only of the primary and middle type. It was the Christians who began copying Bengalis in dress and this slowly spread among others. But what a change within half a century? Women's education has spread, women are advanced in every way—dress, food, ornaments and even serving in men's posts. But culture is even now wanting among many educated men and women. Though some women are

highly educated they seem to lack initiative and energy for social service. I find they still suffer from inferiority complex both among men and women.

Amongst men, since the creation of the Province, provincial and communal feeling are very strong, though most of them are holding high posts in Government Service. Times are so changed that the angle of vision has narrowed down to a a groove round the individual. Happy and simple life has gone for ever, never to return to the golden days of the past.

CHAPTER II

MY IMPRESSIONS OF PATNA—WORKER AMONG WORKERS

When I first went to Patna in 1921 I felt that the people there were somehow different from the people of Orissa, not only in food, dress, manner and culture, but also in their kindness and sympathy to a stranger. They all extended a warm hand to include a woman worker among them. They did not suffer from inferiority complex nor were jealous of a woman's work. They liked service from a woman for the uplift and welfare of their women. Women's position in Patna then was very much what it was in Orissa. Purdah was their stronghold. Illiteracy prevailed and there were other social drawbacks. Gradually Biharee women came out of purdah with the taste of education and they started to take up social service.

I felt a great pleasure in working with men there. I could not have done in Orissa what I did in Bihar had I not got the co-operation and sympathy of the men to give me an opportunity to be one of their workers. I therefore enjoyed a unique position there and felt that I spent the better part of my life among these friends of mine. Those happy days are gone never to come back again. In my humble career I got co-operation from Government as well as from the people. I had several friends who I knew would never deceive me. My best friends were Dr. Sachidananda Sinha, Sir Fakiruddin, Sir Hasan Imam, Sir Ali and Sir Khwaja Mahammad Nur. Whenever

I had any legal difficulties these friends helped me, but lawyers would not take any fees from me. They have helped me in many ways and I am most grateful to them. Patna life was a happy life to me. Because it made me what I am to-day, working with men in various committees and departments, I earned experience, free thinking and courage of conviction, which helped me greatly in my various activities.

CHAPTER III

MY IMPRESSIONS OF FRIENDS AND FOES
(Ingratitude V Gratitude)

God's great blessing to man is a real friend. I had enemies but I had God's great blessing in having real good friends.

My horoscope says that though I would have enemies they would be of such position as not to be able to harm me. But my friends would be of such high status and my guardian angel would so closely help me that my life and work would always be crowned with success.

Ingratitude has hurt me largely for inspite of my helping people in distress and trouble over and over again, I have met with indifference, forgetfulness, neglect and ingratitude.

Here I shall give you some incidents which will make you see how I have been treated by those to whom I rendered unique services.

Let me take a Maharaja's case. It is needless to describe their personal characters. I knew a Maharaja's son. He called me "Didi" and I loved him like a brother. He had a beautiful wife whom he never saw. She was in great distress and asked me to help her. Inspite of all the social customs and prejudices against such action, I took up her cause and made peace between husband and wife, who lived happily for sometime, and a baby daughter was born to them. I left for England and on my return I found the Maharaja's son had become a Mahraja and

had wasted all his fortune on a disreputable woman. He lost his 'gadi' and was ostracised by everyone. After my return when I went to see the Rani the baby daughter requested me to bring her father to her. I did a most daring thing in entering this disreputable woman's house without the knowledge of my father. It was a most daring thing for a young girl like me to do, but my woman's instinct prompted me to satisfy the craving of the child for her father. I entered the house of the Maharaja and called him by his name. He came out and took the dust of my feet. I put my hand on his shoulder and said "Come with me" and I brought him in my car to his little daughter, but could not keep him there permanently. When his mistress died, he found himself a pauper. My father brought him to our house and we tried to reform him as best as we could. The Maharani and her children were brought down by my father from her State and they lived together. The Maharani's allowance used to be spent mostly by the Maharaja for his drink. The Maharani would come to us in a state of destitution and was often in want of money for her daily needs and my father helped her many a time with money. When she was almost on the point of death after the delivery of her second son, my father nursed her day and night as she would not have anything to eat or drink from anyone but from my father. The Maharaja, his wife and daughter all had a tragic end, leaving two sons behind.

These sons knew the history of their parents and how my father had helped them but they never thought of giving a helping hand to my father when he was in great distress, neither have they ever inquired of his daughter, or taken notice of her in anyway. This is ingratitude with a vengeance. If I wrote all about this family it would be a volume. So I desist here.

Here is another instance of ingratitude. One day while I was sitting in my house an Oriya boy came to me and asked me to help him to get Rs. 1000/- from Government as a loan for him to complete his piloting examination. I told him it was impossible for me to get him money, but he would not

leave my room. I phoned to Dr. Haribandhu Mohanty, Secretary Industries Department. He said "No, I have no money to give." But the boy asked me to go to the Chief Minister which I did. He also asked Sri Mahanty whether a loan of one thousand rupees could be given to the boy. Dr. Mahanty's reply was the same "No money." Then the boy requested me to speak to the Chief Secretary. The boy said that nobody would the able to do anything for him, but it was the belief in the Secretariat, that I would be able to get the money for him. I phoned to the Chief Secretary; he asked me to send the boy to him. After the boy returned from the Chief Secretary he told me that he would help him after a week and he asked Dr. Haribandhu Mohanty, "Couldn't the loan be had from some other source?" The boy requested me to speak to the Finance Minister. This I refused. Then he started crying saying that if he did not get the money he would commit suicide as he had mortgaged his father's property. I felt pity for him and I phoned to the Finance Minister and asked him if he would give me a loan of a thousand rupees. He asked me, "What will you do with the money." I told him the case of the boy. He refused to give any loan. Then I told him that unless he gave the money there would be a suicide in my house and he must come to my rescue. Then he said "Very good, send the boy to me." I asked him if he would take the responsiblity off my shoulder. He said "Yes." The boy went to him and returned very happy saying "He would give the money to me." The boy never came back to me when he received the money. This shows the ingratitude of the human nature.

I cannot help mentioning here that inspite of all my efforts to help Orissa educationally and socially I have not been appreciated at all by the people of Orissa. It may be due to my nationality. Here is a glaring instance which has convinced me of ingratitude of my State. In the Council of States I had worked far better than any of my Congress colleagues of the State. This can be verified by the inumerable questions I put to Government in connection with my State and thereby trying to get money and other privileges for my

State. Once the Union Communication Minister while taking lunch at Cuttack remarked at the table to the Finance Minister and other Ministers, "Miss Das is holding the banner of Orissa in the Council of States." This shows the appreciation of the Centre of my efforts for my State. Yet when I was ballotted out after serving two years in the Council of States, I was not renominated by the Congress Pradesh Committee and the leader of the Congress Assembly Party, though the latter assured me that he would send me to the Council. Yet I found that in Bihar, Mrs. Laksmi Menon, serving in thePatna University Training College for a few years only, was ballotted out also with me, and was sent back by the Bihar Congress Committee to the Council of States. Almost all the other States returned the out-ballotted members, but mine did not. Am I not justified in being hurt over all this ungratefulness on the part of people whose interest I tried to serve so well?

Here is another instance of glaring ingratitude of one of my relations. I gave Rs. 75,000 to help him during 50 years of his life, I married his daughters and educated his sons. In my old age I bought a house for his sons, so that they may not stand on the road. But his avarice has no bound. He wanted my whole property. Failing to get all my propaty a few he treated me so badly that words fail to express it. That human nature could be so vile is a revelation to me. The wound has gone so deep that I shall never recover from it. Vidyasagar said truly that if you do anything for anybody you create an enemy. I feel the truth of it.

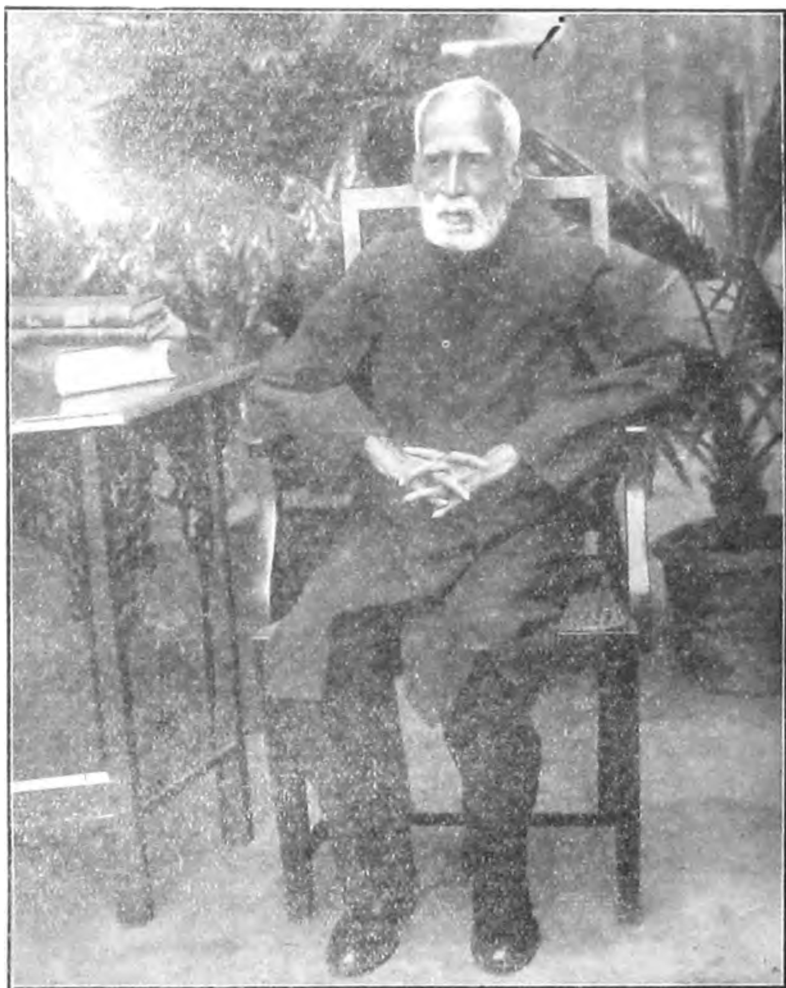
But my readers, do not think that I have experienced ingratitude only in life. I received love, kindness and gratitude from quarters quite unexpected. Here I will give one instance. Forty years ago I did a very slight service to a Rani. The state was under Court-of-Wards and she suffered much humiliation and even insult from her European Governess appointed by the Court-of-Wards. I was instrumental in saving her from this humiliating position. The Governess was dismissed and she was made happy. This instance was put in their office records.

Many years after I met the daughter-in-law of this Rani who was herself a Rani. I did not remember the incident of so long ago. But she had read it all and remembered it with love and gratitude for the aid. She helped me in many ways whenever I was in difficulty. When I was seriously ill she offered to stay with me day and night in the Nursing Home and look after me. She is my best friend in my old age.

When I was in Patna I could help people in various ways owing to my activities there. I secured many friends in high circles, from whom I always received help and kindness. They were grateful to me for what I had done for the welfare of the people and in times of trouble, anxiety and difficulty, they always gave me help and advice which I valued much. Some of my friends in Patna had warned me then not to settle down in Orissa after my father's death as I would never be appreciated in Orissa. How I now wish I had listened to that disinterested advice, for then I would have been saved from much disappointment, worry and sorrow in my old age.

The late Dr. Sachhidananda Sinha, whom I called uncle, and who really took interest in me like an uncle, when he came to Cuttack last as Vice-Chancellor of the Patna University to deliver the Convocation Address to the Utkal University, asked me most earnestly that I should leave Cuttack and settle down at Patna where he would look after my interests. But my promise to my father helped me to withstand the temptation and sacrifice all my interest. It gives me strength to bear and overcome all my difficulties.

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The Grand Old Man.

PART VI

AT EVENTIDE

PART VI

CHAPTER I

"THE PASSING OF THE GRAND OLD MAN:

MY late father, Sri Madhu Sudan was always physically weak. But in his case, the mind ruled the body. His indomitable will ruled his weak body with an iron hand. But this could not go on for long. He did not take sufficient nourishment for a long time and the result was a breakdown. In January, 1934, he felt very weak and hardly could digest any food. After the great earthquake in Bihar in January, 1934 my sister sent me a wire saying " Dada is very ill.'' I felt a premonition that it was the last illness and came to Cuttack at once. On arrival I found him lying on a couch in his bedroom, physically very weak yet full of spirit. He wanted to know all about the Bihar earthquake. He told me that I should try to raise funds for the Bihar sufferers. I convened a meeting of ladies and told them that we should raise at least Rs. 1,500 within ten days. My father was getting weaker daily. My two brothers the late Chandra Kumar and Jitendra Kumar arrived in due course, my late sister Sudhanshu Bala was here. We four brothers and sisters passed our time by his bedside. Crowds of people came daily to see him and to seek his blessings and many stayed at night. Col. Palit was attending him. One day he told my father " You have no disease, only for want of food you are feeling weak. You must have plenty of nourishment." My father asked the doctor a question " Is there any medicine in your science, doctor, to save a man whose call has come from above ? My call has come and I am ready to depart in peace." My late brother Chandra knelt down by his bedside and asked him " Dada have you no wish to live ? Why then do you always talk of leaving us ? " He said, " No, for I could not do any good to you all but I would like to live only for Orissa and to see my dream of a greater Orissa is fulfilled."

Daily when people were coming to see him, he wished them goodbye. With some he discussed the future of Orissa and its problems. He had a glimpse of the New Province of Orissa. He asked me in which Province I shall live after his death for I had houses in Calcutta, Cuttack and Patna. I replied, " You

know very well what my position is in Patna and all about my activities there. There I have many real friends. I can also make a position for myself by my activities in Calcutta if I stay there too. But can I have the same position in Orissa? You know your people well and their feelings towards me. I am not wanted here. I shall always suffer from inferiority complex and "dog in a manger" policy. But as you want me to stay here, I shall do so till I die. The last part of my life will be spent here. I shall severe my connection with other provinces." He was pleased with my decision and blessed me and said "Will you be able to sacrifice your ambition and stay in this house till you die." I said "Yes, I promise."

On the 3rd of February he seemed to be much better and I told his friends not to take the trouble to stay here at night. He took a few teaspoons of rice as doctor advised. In the evening he reminded me to go to the ladies meeting for the collection of the Bihar Earthquake fund. I and my sister left him quiet and calm with a wish that he should sleep. I left his servant to stay near him. I was absent only an hour. On my arrival his bearer told me that my father did not speak, but lay very quiet, he did not like the way my father was breathing very slowly. I found a break in the breathing. I went nearer and called softly "Dada, are you in any trouble?" He said "No." But somehow I felt that it was the last scene. I at once sent for his friends and doctors. By 10 p.m. the house was full of people. In my remembrance it was the coldest day. Men were wearing overcoats, but the Doctor opened all doors for fresh air. Very slowly and calmly the great soul was passing away. Rev. E.R. Lazarus asked him "Shall I pray?" He gave consent by nodding his head. A prayer was offered. His favourite hymn was sung.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say
Come unto me and rest.
Lay down thou weary one lay down
Thy head upon my breast."

I was giving him a little water in a teaspoon to drink.

By 1 p.m. on the morning of the 4th of February Madhu Sudan fell asleep in Jesus. His body lay in state in the marble floored drawing room for thousands of people to pay their last homage. His body was carried in a bier in a procession as requested by several of his friends throughout the town of Cuttack. The cemetery was overcrowded. The body was covered with flowers and placed in the coffin. From Puri some friends came and the bier was covered with flowers. Many ladies took some of those flowers to preserve them in his memory and made their little children put their head on his feet for his blessings from heaven. There was a short prayer and then his body was placed in the coffin. A short service was held. The coffin was gradually lowered into the grave and covered with earth. Friends threw earth and flowers and then the whole coffin was buried. Next year a suitable monument, quite unique, was erected by me. It was unveiled by the last Divisional Commissioner Mr. E. S. Horney. The Epitaph on the grave of Madhu Sudan is quite unique. Every 4th February people go to the cemetery to pay respect to the dead and put flowers. Mr. Horney delivered the following speech before he unveiled the Monument—

"My friends, we meet together today, men and women of all creeds and ranks and occupations, to do honour to the memory of one who was a great servant of the people and a great lover of all classes of people. In a life, devoted to their cause, he strove for the recognition of his race and country as a nation, as an equal and honoured partner in the league of the nations which is the commonwealth of India, and in death, it might well be said of him in the words of the Christian Burial Service "how shall this mortal put on immortality?" He ever obeyed the command "Fight the good fight with all thy might"; the fight against the power of evil, against injustice, humiliation and inhumanity, manfully he led the way towards the promised land of self-governing Orissa, and if it was not given to him to enter it, at the end he stood, like the dying Moses, on the highest peak of Pisgah, in full view of it below

him, in the certain assurance that it should be the heritage of the people ; and so could cry :

"Oh grave, where is thy sting,
Oh death, where is thy victory,
He is not dead : he layeth down
His sword and cross to take his crown"

Let us not forget that we owe him more than honour to his memory. He strove not for his own honour but for the honour of his nation. It is for his people to prove themselves worthy of that honour, and, as he dedicated his life to the union of the nation, so to dedicate themselves to the future of that nation. Above all he served in that selfless devotion which is perfect love. The union of Orissa by map and constitution will be an empty shadow of reality unless it is to be union of hearts, the spiritual brotherhood of all, working in selfless harmony for the common will, and we shall be unworthy of his love unless we also love."

An Englishman can really appreciate the work of an honest, selfless man, unfortunately, though we have got the privilege of being independent and we are under our own national government, there are very few men who can appreciate the work of such a man. It is really to be regretted that efforts to keep up his memory in his own State have been made so far by his daughter. His countrymen forget that they owe him more than honour to his memory.

When I made the gift of Madhu Smriti house to the Orissa Government, I made a condition that a life size marble statue of Madhu Sudan should be erected in the front garden, I am glad to say that the Government is trying its best to make the statue worthy of its name. Government also ordered the road in front of his house and leading to the cemetery, through which his bier was carried, to be named after him.



The Grave of the late Sri Madhusudan Das, in the European Cemetry, Cuttack.

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The Grave of the late Sri Madhusudan Das, in the European Cemetry, Cuttack.

CHAPTER II

MEMORIAL FOR MADHU SUDAN

After the death of my father I wished that his name should be associated with the first Girl's High School which through his efforts was founded and that the Anniversary of his death should be observed in the school as he was the real pioneer of women's education in Orissa. I carried out his instructions and worked to make the first Girls' School a success.

I approached the then D.P.I. of Orissa on the subject. He fully agreed with me and suggested that his portrait should be unveiled in the Ravenshaw Girls' School and the Founder's Day should be observed. When the matter came up before the Managing Committee of the School the Oriya D.P.I. was then in the place of the European D.P.I. and a lot of difficulties were brought forth by him and the members as they were not ready to give honour to one to whom the honour was due. The lady members were jealous of observing the Founder's Day and great discussion took place. However the portrait was unveiled by the last Commissioner of Orissa. The Death Anniversary of Madhu Sudan was not observed in the school properly. The past history of the school did not contain the real facts and by the order of the Congress Education Minister it remained as such. I tried my best to set it right but failed to do so. At last when the Congress Minister left, through the efforts of Mr. B. K. Gokhale, C.I.E., I.C.S., Advisor to H.E. the then Governor of Orissa, the history of the school was changed at my suggestion, real facts were put in and a marble tablet was fixed in the library to show that the High School was founded by us and that it was a real successful female education in Orissa.

Since then the 4th of February of each year is observed as the Death Anniversary of my father at the school and a meeting is held where an essay written by the girl is read on the life of Madhusudan and a gold medal presented by me for which I have endowed a sum of Rs. 2,000.

The public of Orissa held many meetings to make a grand memorial of Madhu Sudan but all the big talk only ended in smoke. In 1936 when the new Province of Orissa was created the public of Orissa announced before the first Governor at the Oath Taking Ceremony at the Ravenshaw Boys' College Hall that the people would like to have a Madhusudan Provincial Library to commemorate the memory of the Father of Oriya Nationalism. This also ended in smoke as there was no real attempt and people do not wish to take trouble. So the eyes of the public turned on my house thinking the daughter should make a gift of her house for the memorial of her father. I was told that some money was collected for the Madhusudan Memorial. But no one seems to know where it was and by whom collected.

In 1937 Sri Biswanath Das, the then Premier of Orissa expressed a wish that I should give the house to the people of Orissa on trust because the house was the place from where Oriya National life radiated throughout Orissa. All the public activities in Orissa for the last fifty years started from this place and the Congress has taken up his work. In this house my late father lived and breathed his last. The Premier held out promises to do big things with the house to perpetuate my father's memory. I was led away by his keen interest and glowing picture and promised to make a gift. As suggested I sent him a proposal with certain conditions. A meeting was held at my house by him with his departmental heads of officers and all my conditions were accepted. But the most important point was the money to maintain the gift and carry out the scheme which he said would be invested in the Bank afterwards. I could not accept his words and asked him to write to me officially to which I would reply. But the official letter never came. This shows the earnest wish and real intention of the Government and since then I was careful.

In 1949 a similar thing happened when Sri Hare Krishna Mahtab was the Premier of Orissa. He also promised to do big

things, if I made the house a gift. I agreed and sent my conditions to the Government which were accepted by him and the then Chief Secretary verbally. But up to this day no reply came from Government. The file was sent to the then Development Minister, Sri Nityananda Kanango and repeated reminders could not bring any response from him.

In 1950 I saw our Governor and told him everything. He took keen interest in it and called an informal meeting in the Government House to fix the aims and objects of the gift. A sub-committee was formed to draft a deed of gift and to suggest the name of the Trustees. But the most important thing the money question came in again to develop the scheme and to maintain a Trust. The would-be Trustees plainly said that unless Government gave the money nothing was possible. The Hon'ble Development Minister was present there. He was asked what money Government was prepared to give for recurring and non-reccurring grants to maintain and develop the scheme. He said he would consult his colleagues and then let them know. But up to this day no letter came from him inspite of several reminders. I also saw the Chief Minister about this. He was eager to have my house and promised to let me know about the money question. But I had not heard anything from him even in 1950.

In this connection I would like to quote a passage from the Hon. the then Chief Minister, Sri Hare Krishna Mahtab, who in his D.O. No. 924 H.C.M. dated 13-2-50 wrote to me "After the death of a great man if any individual or group of individuals exclusively take upon themselves the duty of organising the honouring of the dead then the other are estranged. The best thing therefore is to leave it to the public."

My late father wrote a letter dated 28-12-24 in which he said "I am very much pleased to hear from Sir Dawson Miller that your life is a source of benefit there (Patna). That is the highest form of love you can show to one who have given all to the people. The other day I met a high European official

from Patna who told me that every one speaks highly of your public activities. As regards your desire to perpetuate my memory in Orissa I do not approve of it. I shall talk to you when we meet on the subject. But this much is certain that nothing should be done to perpetuate my memory."

I find that there is God's hand in it. I tried to perpetuate his memory but my efforts have failed three times. Therefore I felt that I should not in any way try to perpetuate the memory of my father. All the above facts convinced me that I was wrong in trying to do it. Therefore I wrote a letter to Government cancelled my offer and changed my mind in giving my house to the people of Orissa.

I wrote to Government to that effect making a statement and explaining why I changed my mind. This was in February 1951. I left Cuttack for medical treatment as I was seriously ill. During my absence the Vice-Chancellor of the Utkal University tried to acquire my house which was Madhusudan's House and which was a purchased property from Court sale by driving her out from her only residence and shelter. He proposed to have the Madhusudan Law College in this house and thus take away the residence of Madhusudan's daughter in her old age. But God is always with her and her father's spirit is helping her to overcome all the difficulties and you will see my readers in the next chapter how God helped me.

CHAPTER III

SOME ACTIVITIES AFTER MY FATHER'S DEATH

After my father's death, I lived in Cuttack as I promised him. Orissa was made a separate Province in 1936, consequently, there was great task for the Government to make arrangements for the new Province. I was appointed by Government as a Municipal Assessor with Sri Manmatha Nath Bose, Ex-Magistrate of Puri. He said he was very pleased to have me for his colleague as I had done well in the Patna

Municipality by increasing the revenue of the Municipality. I told him that I have already refused Government to be an Assessor. He asked me why, I said "I had plenty of enemies here, and do not wish to increase the number by doing honest work in the Municipality." He asked "How did you manage in Patna?" I said "People are very different here than they are at Patna." He asked me to assess my own house, which I did to his satisfaction.

Honorary Magistrate :—

In Cuttack there was a dearth of Second-Class Magistrates, the then District Magistrate of Cuttack asked me to become an Honorary Magistrate, knowing that I worked as an Honorary Magistrate for 9 years in Patna. I refused the honour. One day Sir Hawthorne Lewis, the then Governor of Orissa told me that he would give me First Class power and I should accept it. I laughingly told him "Your Excellency, I do not wish to be His Majesty's guest in my old age." So I declined the honour with thanks. He asked me, "What do you mean?" I explained, saying "in Patna I fined the Chief-Justice of Patna High Court, Minister of Local Self-Government, Officials, non-Officials, everyone there co-operated with me when I fined them. There was no ill feeling towards me. They paid me compliments for doing my duty. But here if I fined your Minister for breaking the bye-laws I would myself be sent to the Jail, so why should I court jail in my old age, when I know your Ministers are different from Patna Ministers. They will not appreciate my doing duties to the State." He asked me "Is this your opinion of my Ministers?" I said "Yes."

Fellow of the Senate :—

I was a sitting Fellow in the Patna University. When the Utkal University was started the sitting Fellows of the Patna University were not taken in the new University of Orissa. When all the Fellows were elected and nominated, one day, I spoke most bitterly to the then Chancellor, Sir Hawthorne Lewis, that the authority who nominated Fellows had done

a great injustice to the sitting Fellows of the Patna University, who were residents of Orissa and they should have been taken in instead of new members. He told me he had no hand in it. But I said to him that as the Chancellor of the University it was his duty to nominate efficient Fellows in the University. Next day, I had a letter from his Private Secretary, that H.E. the Chancellor had nominated me as a Fellow of the Utkal University. My gentle readers, I was not pleased at it. It seemed to me that owing to my talk with him the day before, he had made me a Fellow. I could not accept it, for it hurt my pride, neither could I refuse it, that meant insulting the Chancellor. I was in great dilema. I went to the Government House, to Lady Lewis to have it out with her. The Governor came into her sitting room, saw me and enquired after my health. I said "I am feeling miserable." He asked me "Why?" I replied "Owing to Your Excellency's action." He asked, "What have I done?" I told him about the nomination and how it hurt my pride as I thought owing to my talk he had kindly nominated me. He had a hearty laugh over it. He said, "I had it in mind when you were talking to me, I had already put it down in my file. Only I did not like to say it to you. So put the idea out of your brain. Try to do work as you did in Patna University." He was really a friend to me and I liked him. Once I laughingly told Lady Lewis that I was in love with her husband. "Are you jealous?" "Oh no, I am very glad, for my husband is fond of you." Somehow I got on very well with all the Governors of Orissa, except the first one.

Jail Work :—

I became a Jail Visitor in Cuttack. One day while we were going round the Jail with the Magistrate, I found some Naga Sannyasis in a cell who were all on hunger strike. On enquiry, I was told that they were worshipping according to their rites with burning lamps in their hands in the caves at Khandagiri. They did not decipher any letters of the cave, but they were naked. But under a wrong section, the Magistrate of Puri, who had tried the case sent them to Jail for 10 months,



Madhu Smriti House, Cuttack, which is now Shoilabala Women's College.

This was ridiculous. I as an Honorary Magistrate, would have let them off with warning, when they had committed no offence. But for a District Magistrate to err was serious, so I I took up the case, wrote a strong letter to the Chief Secretary drawing his attention to the injustice done to the Nagas. Sri B. C. Mukerji I.C.S. was a very efficient Chief Secretary. Instead of being put out, he welcomed my letter as he always did and thanked me for bringing such cases before him. He called for the file then and there, released the Nagas, for they had committed no offence and transferred the Magistrate from Puri to Cuttack as A.D.M.

You see my gentle reader, if a Chief Secretary is strong, hard working, efficient and honest he can certainly redress many wrongs and grievances. It was a sad day for Orissa when he left the place.

CHAPTER IV

GIFT OF MADHU SMRITI

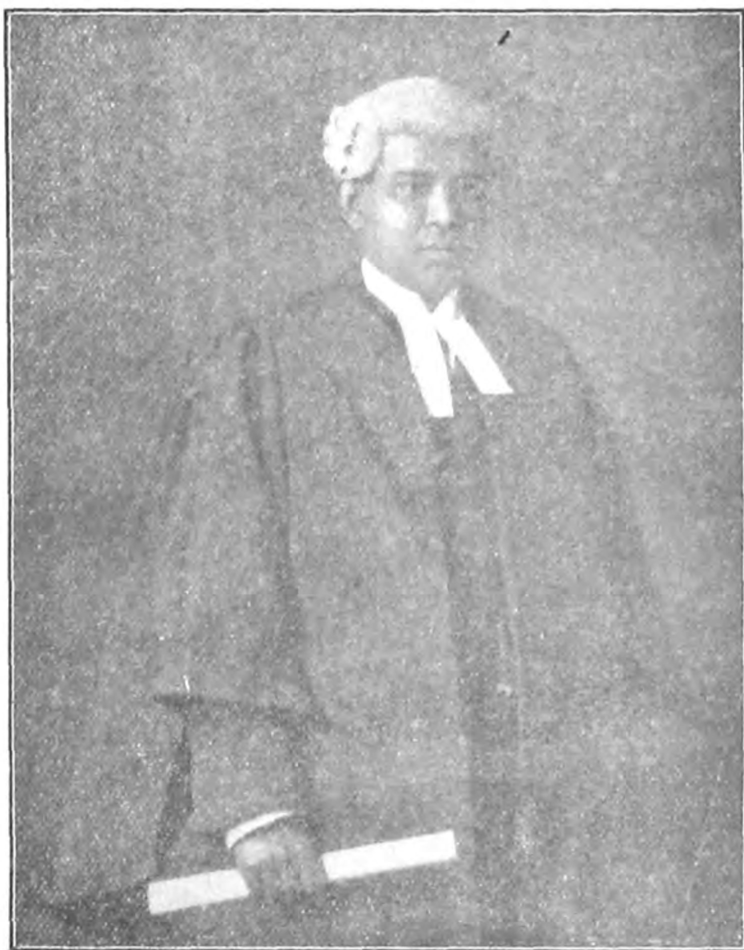
(a) For Women's College

I have already mentioned that the public and Government wanted to take my house to make a memorial of my late Father. But no one would approach me in the proper way. Finding that neither the Goverment nor the public really intended to do anything but meant only to take away the house from me I finally decided not to give it here best to leave it to my relations. Now my gentle readers you will see how I was treated in respect of this house by the then Congress Governmet.

In 1951 I was very ill, and staying at Puri in the B.N.R. Hotel. An high official from Cuttack who came to the Hotel and told me, "You are here and your house is going to be acquired by government, it is gazetted." I could hardly believe my ears. My late father Madhusudan did so much for Orissa and I who had worked with him for the welfare of the country

that at my old age of 77 years I was going to be rewarded by the government by becoming homeless. I was told by an eminent lawyer and the then Chief Justice that I would have no relief from the Hight Court. I went to see the then Governor and told him my whole history. He was most sympathetic and kind to me and assured me that while he was the Governor of State nobody would harrass me and can take my house and asked me to look after my health and leave all my wories to him.

The next day the Chief Minister came and said "Why are you worrying when I am here nobody can take your house." He withdrew the notification in the gazette with respect to the acquirement of my house and sent me a copy of it. When he came to see me next I offered him my house as a gift to the Government. He was greatly surprised he could hardly believe his ears. That a person who fought like a tigress for her house should now be willing to offer it as a free gift. He said, that owing to my various activities and educational work in Orissa, the Government had already named the first Women's College after my name and as the College had no building of its own, Shaila Bala College would be located in this building and it is quite fit and appropriate that women's higher education should spread from Madhusudan House where she had her political and social education. I gave several conditions. Three or four most important conditionsare that 28th April of each year, the birthday of Madhusudan, should be celebrated in the College (since then nothing has been done up to 1955). Second, 4th February of each year, the death anniversary of Madhusudan should be observed. Third, 25th March of each year, the birthday of the owner, should be observed as the Foundation Day of the College. Lastly a life size marble statue shall be put up in the front garden of his house. I wanted to make over my house after my death as the house was the means of livelihood for me. But as the Government wanted it immediately they gave me a pension, for which I was badly criticised by some members in the Orissa Assembly. They said I had no right to make a gift, as the



Sri Chandra Kumar Hazra,
Barrister-at-Law

house did not belong to me, losing sight of the fact that I bought the house at an auction sale. On the 28th of April 1952, Shaila Bala Women's College was inaugurated at Madhu Smiriti, Madhusudan building, and there I addressed the meeting. A copy of my speech is in the Appendix. The History of the house and the people who lived in it is one of sacrifice and service in the welfare of their country. It is to be hoped that girls who are educated in this historical house will follow their example and make work their life and life their work.

(b) Gift of Law Library for the Orissa High Court

My father's law library which is worth a lakh of rupees belonged to to my sister Shudhansu Bala who bought it from the court sale as my father's property went into court when he took insolvency. My sister was the first lady Vakil in India. Through her and my effort the legal Practioners Act was amended as I have already mentioned. After my father's death she wanted to present this Law Library too public institution. But as there was no institution where such books would be useful she left the Library to me to be given to the Orissa High Court when when it came into existence. The High Court was established in 1948 and I made over the Law Library at the suggestion of the then Chief Justice Sri B. K. Roy to the High Court. Where in a separate room the books are kept and the room called "Madhusudan Law Library." A protrait of my sister and father was unveiled. A marble slab giving the history of the library was placed on the wall.

CHAPTER V

DEATH OF MY BROTHERS

The years between 1942-48 were memorial years for me. During these years I lost my two brothers and only sister.

My brother Nagendra Kumar Hazra first went to the other land. He suffered for a long time from kidney troubles. He was most independent and honest. He left a daughter and a son behind, who are dear to me.

Then God took my second brother, Chandra Kumar Hazra. He died of coronary thrombosis. His death was a great shock to me. His was a dear brother and very honest. I bought my Cuttack house in his name, intending to give it to him after my death. The property which is now worth 3 lakh of rupees. The moment I asked him to return my property to me he returned the property by a deed of relinquishment. Such was he! His son Dilep Kumar is staying with me in my house.

CHAPTER VI

SUDHANSHU BALA MY LIFELONG FRIEND

My late sister Shudhanshu Bala was in my charge since the death of my mother in 1892 and was brought up in Mr. S. Das' house She passed all her examinations up to Law as a private student and paid all her educational expenses by working. She was very independent and would not take any help from any one. She was also a Kindergarten teacher. Thus she helped considerably in training my teachers in the Ravenshaw Girls' School in 1908. In 1913 when I made over the Ravenshaw Girls' School to Government, Shudhanshu Bala was appointed the Head Mistress of the Kindergarten School. She used to work as well as study. She stayed at Madhu Smriti ever since I came to Cuttack. She was the Inspectress of Schools in Bihar and Orissa and was appointed afterwards as the Lady Principal of the Ravenshaw Girls' School. After her retirement she lived in Madhu Smriti with me. She was very independent and refused all help from me. After passing the Law when the Patna High Court refused her admission she sent an appeal to the Privy Council and a representation to the then Viceroy and through our joint efforts the Government introduced an amendment of the Legal Practitioners Bill in the Central Assembly, which without any dissenting voice from the members passed into an Act in 1923. She then was enrolled in the High Court in 1923 and practised as a lawyer in the Patna High Court for two years. During my father's insolvency she was of great help to him.



Kumari Shudhansu Bala Hazra, B.A., B.L.
First Lady Advocate in India.

From the Court she bought my father's library and many other pieces of furniture. After my father's death she never left me even for a day and would go everywhere with me as she did not like me to travel alone. She had an abdominal operation in 1933. After that she was not quite her own self. In 1948 in May she went to the Cuttack Nursing Home. As the doctors could not do anything for her I took her down to Calcutta for treatment. She suffered great pain but never complained. She had cancer of the stomach. She loved my father so much that she would not part with anything which my father used. Each and everything with my father's association was precious to her. So on her death-bed she made me promise that his Law Library must not go out of Orissa but must be made a gift to some suitable Institution. After her death in Calcutta on July 4th 1948 I kept my promise and made a gift of it to the Orissa High Court. There her portrait was unveiled by the Chief Minister and a tablet was placed on the wall containing the history of the Law Libary. Thus she received a unique honour.

Since her death I have never thought that she is no more. Madhu Smriti is full of her associations. I never realised during her life-time that I would miss her so much. I have never found a friend like her and at every stage I feel her absence and feel very lonely in the big house.

Shudhanshu Bala tried to follow her Master's footsteps. In her last illness she took up her cross bravely and with great fortitude. She forgave the wrongs done to her by others and she had a kind word for all and kept smiling, dissociated herself completely from worldly things till the very last. Death came to her on the morning of 4th July and without a struggle she softly crossed the river of Life. I have preserved her personal things along with my father's in a museum at Madhu Smriti. She will always be remembered for her self-sacrificing spirit and her love for my father and myself. May her spirit be in peace. She was buried in Calcutta cemetry where I have preserved her grave suitably.

CHAPTER VII

MERGER OF SARAIKELA AND KHARSWAN AND TROUBLE OF ORIYA SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THOSE STATES

After my sister's death, I became very ill. So I went out for some change to recoup my health.

On my return to Cuttack in September 1949, I read in the local newspapers about the atrocities committed by the Bihar Govt. in the States of Saraikela and Kharswan which caused great distress to the Oriya people. I could not sit still. Whenever I hear any wrong is done to anyone I always try to write to the authorities to seek for redress. In the case of Saraikela and Kharswan, I wrote to our Prime Minister, Pandit Jawharlal Nehru, Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar B. Patel, Law Minister Dr. Ambeda Kar and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly and late Dr. Sacchidananda Sinha, the great leader of Bihar. I sent a copy of all my letters to our State Government and also to Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, the Chief Minister of Orissa and Chief Secretary of Orissa.

At this distant date I have mislaid some of the important letters which I wrote and also the replies. I find I have got a copy of my letter addressed to Sardar B. Patel and the late Dr. Sacchidananda Sinha and some replies from my State Govt. which I am giving below.

First Letter

"Madhu Smriti"
Cuttack
Orissa.
The 30th August, 1949.

Dear Sardar Patel,

I am very glad to learn from the statements in the Press that you are improving in health and that it is expected that you will soon be your robust and strong self again. The sooner that happens the better. For it seems we can't do without our "Strong man" even for a short while. The matter that has prompted me to write this letter to you is a case in point.

I am sure that information regarding the atrocities committed by the Bihar Government on the Oriya population in the two Oriya States of Saraikela and Kharswan have found their way to your sick bed. I am also sure that they would have disturbed you considerably. For your anxiety that every one should have a just and square deal is well known. I would not have ordinarily thought it fit to add to your discomfort by disturbing you in your illness with a long letter like this, but I feel unhappy in hearing about the happenings in these two States. Besides some people in Orissa and some refugees from the affected areas have asked me to do something for the victims of this authoritative hooliganism. They consider it my duty to take up this cause as the daughter of the late Madhusudan Das, the father of Oriya Nationalism. I agree with them. But as I told them, I am seventy-five years of age and my nerves and eyesight are far from good. If I had been 10 years younger, I would probably have merited the distinction of being the National Government's prisoner of state by offering *Satyagraha* in Saraikela and Kharswan where innocent people are being terrorised and harassed by the Congress Government in Bihar, simply because these people are not willing to be 'Biharised'. But weak and disabled as I am, my thought flies to you for because of you unbending will for strong and straight action you have become known as our "Iron Man".

When you helped Orissa in amalgamating with her the ex-State areas, the whole of Orissa blessed you for giving shape to their long-cherished dream and long-felt want of a strong and consolidated Utkal. We expected then that all the outlying Oriya tracts would be brought into this Greater Utkal and this would in its turn become a strong and useful limb of Greater India. But for some mysterious reasons, the amalgamation of these two States with Orissa was delayed. Ugly rumours got about that this was due to the influence of some eminent Biharis in the Congress High Command. But many of us discounted the rumour as we put our faith in your reputation of unflinching impartiality. "The Sardar won't put up with any nonsense of

that sort" many of us used to think and say. It was being said during those days by the people who wanted the States to remain with Bihar that for reasons of territorial contiguity, the two States could be better administered in Bihar. That pretence was no longer of any avail after the integration of Mayurbhanj in Orissa. But inspite of this we learnt somtime ago that the two States have been given to Bihar. Even then if the Bihar Government had properly looked after the Oriya population in these States, I would usually have thought it best to have things as they were. But their organised repression and hooliganism has beaten the similar acts of the British Government in India. All these have shaken the faith of the people in their fairness and have tarred the fair name of just administration under the National Government.

If my father were alive to-day, he would certainly have taken up this cause in his own unique way. I am but a poor substitute for his able and eminent personality. But I hope I can depend unhesitatingly on your courage and fairness. I remember a courageous bureaucrat, Lord Curzon, who in fairness to popular agitation recalled the iniquitous partition of Bengal which was his own doing. Will it be too much to expect a great national leader like yourself to do what is right and just in this case where it is abundantly obvious that the wrong is not only one of injustice but that it has given birth to exploitation, repression and terrorism. How can we build our State on solid democratic foundations if we deny to the weak the fundamental liberties and allow strong aggressors to suppress their identity by terrorism and tyrrany? I invite your kind attention to two recent statements in the Press, one from the Leader of the Opposition Orissa Assembly and the other from the Raja Saheb of Saraikela. These would speak for themselves.

I have no doubt in my mind that you will give this matter your most earnest and sympathetic consideration and would undo all wrong and injustice. I hope also that this pleading from a woman would not fail to move your kind heart. If this does not succeed, I shall have no other alternative but to run

to you either at Delhi or elsewhere, inspite of my age and infirmity, to try and convince you of your duty to do justice by the oppressed people who look up to you as their saviour.

A line in reply will assure me that this letter has reached you safely.

Hoping to be excused for this intrusion,

I remain,
Yours sincerely,
SD. S. B. DAS

The Hon'ble Sardar V. Patel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, Government of India, Camp—Bombay.

N.B.—I did not get any reply from him as he was ill. His secretary acknowledged my letter.

Second Letter

" Madhu Smriti "
Cuttack
September, 1949.

My Dear Uncle,

After four months' sojourn out of Cuttack I have come back home again, not benefitting much in health, gaining much experience and knowledge by my stay in Musoorie, Dehrah Dun Delhi and Caloutta.

I am writing this long letter to you today on a ve1 important matter. I hope you will kindly give your best consideration and help me to be successful in my efforts to get justice done to the people for whom my father did so much. In fact, he gave his life for Orissa. With his last dying breath he uttered the word 'Orissa.' I cannot forget that scene. I wish to discharge the debt of my obligation to that great soul and to the country in which I have made my home. Will you not help me, uncle dear, in this great work of my life? While writing this letter, I am thinking of my life in Patna where I

was happy for fifteen years with you all. With your help and influence I became a power in Patna. You gave me the proud privilege and honour of becoming the first woman honorary magistrate in India. I do not think any woman in any province enjoyed so much privilege and distinction as I had in your province, where you and your people without distinction of caste, creed, sex and nationality helped me by giving me votes against a candidate who was their own relative and friend. Can I forget those happy days of my election campaign? Though a Bihari to the backbone, you showed no provincialism in my case. But now why have you and your people become so clannish? I am referring to Seraikela and Kharswan. It was my father's dream that all the Feudatory States of Orissa should be merged in Orissa proper. That great dream was realised when the country became free and the Congress Party assumed power. But why these two States were kept separate and merged with Bihar afterwards is not understood. Whether these States remained with Orissa or Bihar was of no interest to Sardar Patel or Pandit Nehru, but to please one Bihari of the High Command and to please you—so our people say—these States have been added to your province. The province of Bihar, as it is, is quite big and rich in itself and you do not need these two States to enrich you further. Bihar and Orissa were joined with Bengal for a long time and we all know how Bihar and Orissa suffered under that administration. Then it became our lot to be separated from Bengal and work together. Your province is like an elder sister to Orissa. They were separated in 1936 for their own welfare and development. I believed that with this separation we did not lose the love and sympathy of our foster sister and that we had good will towards each other. But since my arrival here, I am shocked to learn from statements in the papers and from victims from Seraikela and Kharswan that the atrocities and barbarism with which the unfortunate Oriya people in these States are repressed are such that they make even my cold blood now run hot. It seems they have beaten even the atrocities committed under the British Government. What have these innocent people done

to be the victims of such authoritative terrorism, hooliganism and exploitation by the Congress Government in Bihar? Is it their fault that they do not wish to be "Biharised" but continue to read and converse in their own mother tongue?. You are a great leader of Bihar and you have great influence over Sri Krishna Sinha and Sri Krishna Ballav and Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Why can't you put a stop to these atrocities and use your great influence to give back to Orissa these to States which rightly belong to Orissa? Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel would not stand against this decision of yours, I am sure.

You know I am a fighter. I appeal to you to do justice to Orissa and I feel sure I do not appeal in vain. If, however, you fail to help me, I shall come up to Patna, stay in your house and be a plague to you (you always called me a plague of you. life, yet loved me) until you give in.

Apart from my pleading to you from Orissa, let me plead to you from the side of Bihar. For a great intellectual like you, no special emphasis from me is necessnry to realise that your atrocious acts in Seraikela and Kharswan is tarring the fair name of the Bihar Government for just administration. Injustice and repression defeat their own ends. The more you go on in this way, the worse will be the case for Bihar.

I would also like to remind you that the first resolution in the Central Assembly for consolidation of the Orissa Province was moved by you. I, therefore, know how in your hearts there is genuine love for Orissa and pride on account of its progress and well-being.

So the fact is that I, as a lover of both Bihar and Orissa, am pleading to you, who is equally a lover of both to do justice in interests of both the sisters, Bihar and Orissa ; so that peace and good will between them may be restored. So uncle dear, please help me in this great mission of my life.

I hope you are keeping well. I am looking forward to meeting you some time in the cold weather.

With my affectionate regards and good wishes for your robust health and long life,

Your affectionate niece,
S. B. Das

Dr. Sacchidananda Sinha, Bar-at-Law.
Sinha Library Road.
Patna.

Third Letter

Sinha Library Road
Post Box No. 62 G.P.O.
Patna
The 11th September, 1949.

My Dear Shoila,

Yesterday afternoon I received your kind and affectionate letter (without date) and hasten to send you a short reply, as, for reasons I shall presently explain, I am not in a position to send you a long one. You have written a great deal recalling your very happy life at Patna, where you justly occupied a very prominent position in the civic life of the city. I had advised you repeatedly not to return to Calcutta or Cuttack, but to stay here permanently. But you decided to take your own line in the matter, and I have no grievance or complaint against you for your having done that. At the same time I fully realise that you must be feelling very lonely at Cuttack now, especially that your dear sister had passed away. As regards myself, you do not perhaps know of the very serious nature of my illness which began in the third week of last October with an attack of influenza, and which continued till the end of March and from which even now I have not yet fully recovered, though I am much better. But I do not grumble as I know that many other people at my time of life (78) are even in a

worse condition than I am.I hope for the best and keep myself ready to obey the call of Providence when He choses to call me,

Owing to the state of my health I have not taken any part in public affairs for quite a long time. I presided as the first President of the Constituent Assembly of India in December 1946, since which time I have not been able to attend a single day's session of the Assembly. You will thus see that I am completely out of touch with anybody in Delhi, whether the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister, or anyone else. Occasionally I receive and reply to a letter from Dr. Rajendra Prasad, that is all. In writing to me, therefore, on the subject of the two Singhbhum district States and their merger, you have been wrongly advised to approach me. This is a matter with which I have absolutely no concern. If things really be half so bad as you have tried to depict them, I confess I do not understand why your Prime Minister cannot represent them to the Deputy Prime Minister Delhi, or even to the Prime Minister of Bihar ? In any way, I am in no way concerned with this particular matter, and I very much fear those who advised you to write to me such a long letter, about a matter with which I have absolutely no concern, put you, my dear niece, on the wrong track. I fear, therefore, that I am not the person who can be, for reasons stated above, of any use to you in this particular question. But if you will do me the favour to write to me again on any matter, it goes without saying that I shall be only too happy to give it my best and most careful consideration.

Trusting all well, I remain with my blessings and good wishes,

Ever Yours affectionately,
SD, S. SINHA

Fourth Letter

Madhu Smriti
Cuttack
15th September, 1949

My Dear Uncle,

I am glad to get your letter explaining the whole situation and your position. I am very sorry I gave trouble by writing an unncessary long letter.

You are wrong, uncle dear. No one has advised me to write to you or to others. You know your niece very well. She never listens to the advice of others if she makes up her mind to do a thing. In this case I was driven to write to you by reading the accounts in the press given by the leader of the Opposition of the Orissa Assembly and also hearing tales of woe from the victims themselves.

I do not know what action is being taken by our Prime Minister in this connection. But I have heard that a committee has been formed or is going to be formed by the Centre to investigate into this matter.

In acknowledging my letter, the Prime Minister of India informs me that appropriate action will be taken.

I am very angry with you for not having written to tell me of your serions illness since October last. I hope it is not your heart that is troubling you and I hope you are much better now.

I do not know what you will say when I tell you that I have already offered my house in Cuttack to the people of Orissa as gift to perpetuate the memory of my late father. The Government will act as a trustee, with several conditions. The papers are all with the Law Secretary. When I get a reply from Government, I shall send you the draft deed and and the reply from Government, I shall send you a copy for your opinion and advice.

I am not writing a long letter to you today. When I hear from you, I shall write to you again a letter to cheer you up.

I am still living in this world with its manifold drawbacks and shortcomings.

With my best wishes and affectionate regard.

Your affectionate niece
S. B. Das.

Fifth Letter

Sinha Library Rd.
G.P.O. Box No. 52
Patna
The 18th September, 1949.

My Dear Shoila,

Your kind and affectionate reply, dated the 15th September to my last letter, is welcome. I am glad you have now seen the matter, you wrote to me about, in its correct perspective. I must tell you frankly that I was distressed that you should have taken part in this wretched Bihari-Oriya controversy, without knowing all the facts and circumstances. Since I replied to your letter, the Bihar Government have issued a long communique, traversing the entire ground underlying the agitation in Orissa on the subject of the merger of the two States. I have no personal knowledge of the matter one way or the other, but the solution of the problem lies in your Prime Minister approaching either the Central Government or the Bihar Government. Any way, I am glad you now see things in the proper light.

I am highly gratified to learn from your letter that you have decided to make over the house as a trust for the public, and that arrangements are being made in the right and proper way for its upkeep and maintenance in public interest. I shall be obliged to you by your kindly writing to me, from time to time, and keeping me in touch with your welfare.

With my blessings and good wishes,

I remain,
Yours affectionately,
S. Sinha

Sixth Letter

1st Oct. 49.

My Dear Uncle,

Thank you for your kind and affectionate letter received duly. I have also received a very kind letter from Dr. Rajendra Prasad explaining the whole question of Saraikela and Kharswan. Now when the Central Government have finally decided to merge these two states with the Bihar Government, I hope the Bihar Government will not take hard measures to make the Oriya people give up their mother tongue but treat them kindly so that I at least will have nothing to complain about the Bihar Government.

Uncle dear,I read the whole of your article in connection with the High Court Judge's removal from the Bench. It is a splendid article, very clear and to the point. Our Law Minister also told me how much he appreciated it. I wonder how you can write such lucid and intellectual articles even at this age when your health is so bad. I know you are a very powerful writer and love writing. So please write a long letter to your niece who always reads them with great interest. Even a scolding from you is welcome.

The Womens' Conference is not going to be held in Patna this year. The women of your province had invited us, but have now backed out, so their is no prospect of my coming to Patna for the Conference. But if my uncle invites his niece, she may come and be his guest for a week or two, otherwise I do not know when I shall meet you. The doctor advised me to have my cataract operated and I am going to have it done in the cold weather.

Trusting you are keeping well. With my love, kind regards, and best wishes for my dear Uncle.

Your affectionate niece,
Shoila

Dr. Sachidananda Sinha
Sinha Library Road
Patna

Sinha Library Rd.
G.P.O. Box No. 52
Patna
The 4th October, 1949.

My Dear Shoila,

Your kind and affectionate letter of the 1st is most welcome, and I highly appreciate all that you have said in it in connection with my articles, about which I have received numerous letters from various sources, including the Governor-General of India and Dr. Sir Hari Singh Gour.

As regards the two States merged in Bihar, I knew that so far back as January last, they had been merged definitely and finally by Sardar Patel in Bihar, and there was absolutely no chance of the question being re-opened, but then a large section of the people of Orissa were hoping against hope that they would get them back, as they are hoping against hope that they would get the whole of the Singhbhum district (in which these two States are situated) merged in Orissa. As a matter of fact, these two States are not Orissa States at all in any sense, but they are Adibasi States; the bulk of the population in both of them consisting of Adibasis. The Bihar Government have done nothing to suppress Oriya for any purpose, whatsoever, nor will they do so in future. You need not, therefore, worry yourself about it any longer.

Lastly, I am not surprised to learn what you have said about the Women's Conference, nor am I a bit sorry. When you invited the Conference, twenty years or so back from now, it was a grand success by reason of your own efforts, but there is no such prospect now as Patna does not possess, amongst its women citizens, any one of your enthusiasm, ability, and energy. So it was bound to be a failure, and I am not at all unhappy that it is not going to be held here.

Hoping to hear from you in due course and at your leisure and convenience, and trusting all well, I remain, with my blessings and good wishes.

Yours affectionately
S. SINHA.

Seventh Letter

Home Department

Cuttack, the 15th October, 1949

D.O. No. 18778A

DEAR MISS DAS,

I return the papers which you very kindly sent to me. Your correspondence with different authorities on the question of Seraikela and Kharswan is worthy of the daughter of Madhusudan Das.

Wfth best writes,

Yours sincerely,
N. Senapati

Miss S. B. Das,
Madhusmriti,

Eighth Letter

Office of the Hon'ble Premier, Orissa

Dated Cuttack, the 3rd September 1949

D.O. No. 4717 HP.,

Dear Madam,

I am desired to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 31-8-49 to Hon'ble Premier enclosing copies of two letters addressed to Hon'ble Prime Minister, India and Deputy Prime Minister, Hon'ble Sardarji and to convey you his thanks for the same.

Hon'ble Sri Mahtabji eulogistically further observes that the letter proves the maxim, " Worthy daughter of the Worthy Father."

Yours sincerely,
P. TRIPATHI
Secretary to Hon'ble Premier.

Miss S. B. Das,
Madhu Smriti,
Cuttack.



Shollabala and the baby Tikayat of Kanika.

CHAPTER VIII

(a) RAJA SAILENDRA NARAYAN BHANJ DEO OF KANIKA

I find in my book that I have forgotten to mention many things about my "Baby." Readers, you must be wondering how a Raja's son can be my "Baby." I am going to tell you here how he became my "Baby."

The old Raja and my late father were great friends. The Raja lost his first three children before the birth of "Baby", and sought my father's advice as he was keen in having a child. My father told him that he must have a Civil Surgeon, an English Nurse at the time of "Baby's" birth and he made necessary arrangements.

One early morning in September, 1908, a messenger from the Raja's house came and informed that a son was born. At 4 o'clock in the morning my father and I went to see the baby boy. It is a custom in many houses where they lose infants, they sell their child to a person feeling that the child's life would be saved, and so this baby was sold to me for only three "kaudis', and since then he became my "Baby." I used to look after him, and give direction to his Nurse. When he was one year old I brought him to my house where he lived till he was 6 years old. When he just started uttering words, he called me "Pa-pa." This word is an abbreviation of "Baba." He learnt this word from the servant. When I went to the Raja's house the servants used to say to the Baby "Miss baba is coming." He could not say "Miss", but he used to say "Papa." I am always fond of children and I loved the Baby like my own child. He went with me everywhere. His parents had every confidence in me and seeing that the Baby is so attached to me they left him altogether to my care. The poor child suffered a great deal from bronchitis. Sometimes he would have three attacks a month. In 1913 (I may be mistaken in the year) my father went to Delhi for the Imperial Council and I went with him to Delhi but the Baby would not stay behind and I had to take him with me to Delhi where he became so ill that my father

sent us down to Calcutta. The eminent physicians in Calcutta advised me to take him to Simla to get rid of the bronchitis. I took him to Simla, with his mother and there he was cured.

When he went to the Stewart School he lived in his own house at Kanika Rajbati and used to come to me daily. When I went to Patna I did not see my "Baby" for many years. He was a most loveable child and hardly gave me any trouble.

I will narrate something which will amuse you all to know how my Baby's brain worked. He was only four years old I used to make him say prayer before going to bed.

One night he asked me "are all little children going to bed at 7 o'clock offering prayer to God"? I said "Yes." Then he said, "Papa I will not say my prayer now, for God will not know who is Baby, because all other children will say prayer, so I shall say afterwards." He wanted me to stay with him a little longer and tell stories and did not like to go to sleep. This little Baby from his childhood had self-respect. Here is another story of his childhood.

He had his governess, his tutor who used to take him out for a morning ride in Simla Hills. He would not like to dress so early and used to kick his bearer when he wanted to dress him. So I told the bearer that he should box his ear if he did it again. The servant followed my advice. Next morning Baby howled and cried aloud and went to his mother to complain, but his mother was a very good woman. She knew the value of discipline. She told her son that he should not have kicked the servant. The case was dismissed. Never again he kicked the servant.

When I was in trouble with my younger brother J. C. Hazra, he helped me. In order to get out of the clutches of my brother I sold both my houses 70A and 70B Chuckerebere Road North, Calcutta to my Baby and his wife, but in 1954 when I wanted to re-purchase the houses in order to give shelter to my brother and his family at 70B Chuckerebere Road, Baby



Tikayat Sailendra Narayan Bhanja Deo of Kanika Chairman. District Board, Cuttack.

allowed me to re-purchase the house. But before he sold the houses to me, he advised me not to buy the house, but to take the house for my life and after my death, he would have it again. I regret I did not take his offer. I wanted to possess the house for the brother and his family to live there after my death and this house has brought trouble to me again.

I gave "Baby" my first name "Shoila" and he is named Sailendra Narayan Bhanj Deo. He is quite different from his class, most generous at heart, simple and honest, no vices except smoking (if you call it a vice). He is fond of books and has an interest on various subjects from flood control to Jail reform. He has a scientific bent of mind. His hobby is boat building and sailing. He is not fond of any other amusements. He has three sons and is a very loving father and is most attached to his wife and very generous.

He is a great help to me in my old age—and I still call him, "my Baby" and love him as my own child.

(b) DR. HARE KRISHNA MAHTAB

While dealing with my activities in and outside the Council of State, I may mention about Dr. Hare Krishna Mahtab who was the Premier of Orissa.

While he was the Premier I had many fight with him, but I always found him just and reasonable. He helped me in various ways to redress wrongs done to others. It was really a misfortune for Orissa when he left Orissa for the Govt. of India.

I met him again in 1952 in Parliament House when he was a member of the Lok Sabha. Many a time when I needed his help and advice, I found in him a good friend. Now when he is the Governor of Bombay, with many calls on his time and attention, I find him the same 'Mahtab'—the kind and considerate brother of yore, and I know I can always count on his help in my old age.

CHAPTER IX

COMEDY OF ERRORS

All my life I have been seriously ill off and on. I fell ill, I suffered and I got well. For a few months I would be quite ill. Then doctors would set me right again. My horoscope says I shall never be quite a healthy person but by taking care of my health I shall live long. It seems that my horoscope is right. In 1942 I had two major operations and was almost on the point of death. Thrombosis of the legs troubles me off and on. But since 1948 there have been several comedy of errors in my life through eminent specialists. I have suffered greatly from cough. It was a chronic cough. I have suffered from this cough off and on for the last thirty years. The blame was mine. With a bad throat I daily took plenty of acid things. In September 1949 the cough was so severe and continuous that I was very bad. I had such violent spasms which shook my whole frame. I was then taken to the Nursing Home in the Cuttack General Hospital and eminent doctors attended me. Every medicine was given a trial with no success. Penicillin was injected with no result. I was taken to Calcutta to find out the real cause. Examinations of my chest, lungs, heart and throat revealed nothing. I was examined by several specialists and they also found nothing specially wrong. I was sent to Seva Sadan for X'Ray plates of my heart, chest and lungs, Several plates were taken. When the plates were shown to the specialists, they at last made the discovery that there was Anuerism of the Aorta (*i.e.* the aorta, the main artery of the heart) was slightly elongated at the base and had formed a pouch). I was told that my days were numbered and I had to get ready for my last journey. Doctors advised me to lead a quiet life, no worry, no excitment and no exertion, no work, and no talking. I went to a very renowned physician and after his careful examination, I put a question to him "You are a well-known physician can you not repair me"? He looked at me and

said "Impossible, how can I give green shoots to an old tree ?." "Then what can you do for me?" I asked. "I can only advise and perhaps alleviate your pain. Don't use your lungs too much," he replied. Inspite of his warning I am still using my energy and my lungs too much. I am very much alive. I have proved that all the doctors were wrong. Seeing me and my energy and my sound health they now say "There cannot be anurisim of Aorta."

Another comedy of Errors. In Nov. 1950 I felt a lump in my abdomen and some discomfort. I called an eminent surgeon. He also felt a lump, but he asked me to have X'Ray plates. Seva Sadan took some plates which revealed nothing. Then I went to a famous gynæcologist. He suspected a tumour as big as a tennis ball which must be removed without delay. Then I consulted another physician he felt something bigger than a tennis ball which must be removed. Then I decided to remove the tumour as it would get malignant if I kept it in my stomach. A homely doctor came and examined me very thoroughly but he could find nothing. Very humbly he said "As I am nobody I better take you to somebody whose opinion is worth having." So he took me to an expert who has international reputation. He examined me thoroughly and said "There is no tumour." I said "Will you please write it down for me?" He did so. I gladly pocketed the paper and kept it for future reference, I wanted to find out from the other experts and so I got myself admitted to the P. G. Hospital for final examination under anesthetic. Here I had a very pleasant time. I knew there would be no operation as there was no tumour. I had a nice room to myself, fairly decent food, a number of patients to talk to, visitors and friends to sympathise. What more did I want ? I passed my days very happily trying to serve other patients. Whenever the doctor would come I had a plea ready for him to make him depart in peace. After fourteen days I submitted to a gas examination. Then they too discovered that I had nothing worthy of an operation. I had three more days of grace to while away my time in the hospital, then I left it with regret.

A Russian fortune-teller has written out my horoscope. He gives me 90 years of easy life. I am now 81-strong, hale and hearty. I may even prove the Russian a false prophet and live to 100 as my friends want me to. It gave me great pleasure to prove that every one was in the wrong. Life is indeed a comedy of errors.

CHAPTER X

HOW I CAME TO BE A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF STATES

In the winter of 1951 Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Rashtrapati visited Cuttack and stayed at the Raj Bhawan. There was as usual a big reception for him at the Raj Bhawan when all the local dignitaries, officials and others were invited to meet the President. The Raj Bhawan is an old house dating back to the Mahratta times. It is situated on the bank of the Kathjuri river which is a tributary of the Mahanadi river. The Raj Bhawan grounds are pretty and the reception was in the open air, beautiful shamiana was put up with cushioned chairs and sofas inside. The Governor and the President sat on a big sofa specially kept for them and the guests were taken in from time to time to pay their respects to the distinguished guest of the evening. Ministers and a few higher officials also sat in side the shamiana.

I was taken in by the Governor's Secretary to meet the Rashtrapati. When I was introduced he said. "I know Miss Das very well; she is an old friend of mine." I was asked by him to sit near him on the sofa. In the meantime, Sri Biswanath Das, ex-Premier of Orissa and President of the Congress Pradesh Committee came in, took a chair and sat down facing us and began to talk about the coming election. I was asked by the President whether I was going to stand for the Parliament or Assembly. I said : " What is the use of standing when your Congress will not have me. I have my past experience of the Congress people here." The Governor then said :

"Miss Das, you never told me that you would like to stand." "Your Excellency" said I "perhaps you do not know how the Congress treated me in the past. After giving me hopes of sending me to the legislature they did not vote for me. Naturally, I don't trust them any more." Then Sri Biswanath Das thought that he must save himself and the party from my just accusation. He said: "Miss Das is our eldest sister and we all want her to live long. We do not want her to enter into our dirty politics as we respect her too much. Therefore we did not send her name. It would only injure her health." I smiled at it and said: "It was indeed generous of the President of the O.P.C.C. to think about my health with such concern. But where was he when I was dying in 1950? He never cared to enquire once about my health." Both the President and the Governor had a good langh over it.

In the Orissa Assembly there were 140 seats. Panditji was always asking the voters to send a large number of women to the Legislatures. He also insisted that honesty and integrity of character should have priority in the selection of candidates. I was very much encouraged by the statements of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru. I wanted to get at least half a dozen women of Orissa into the State Legislature and two women into the Parliament. I saw the Chief Minister Shri Naba Krushna Chaudhury more than once and asked him to select some women. He told me that there was no woman fit to be a member of the Assembly much less to represent in the Parliament, and emphatically refused to select women for that purpose. You, my reader, must have seen from my memoirs that I never take a "No" from anybody. Once I make up my mind to do a thing I will have it done. I was determined to have at least one woman in the Orissa Assembly and one in the Parliament also. So I wrote to the Prime Minister who was also the President of the Congress Party, blaming the Pradesh Committee for its attitude and asking him whether he would support my candidature to the Council of States, and of the Rajmata of Ranpur for the Orissa Assembly. In my letter to him I stated that it seemed as if non-party

women, whatever their experience and record of their service for the conntry did not have a place under the new regime. I also pointed out that if these women became disappointed and joined other parties in the country such as the Communist the blame will have to be borne by the Congress alone. Pandtiji did justice to my letter. He approved of the Rajmata's candidature and I found that the O.P.C.C. had also sent my name to the Central Parliamentary Board for the Council of States. Thus I was doubly approved by the State as well as the Central Committee and I became a Congress candidate. However, I was not a full-fledged party member; neither did I wear Khaddar. I wanted to become a Congress party member after seeing whether the Government was better than the British Government. The elections were held in March 1952.

The Orissa Assembly had 70 Congress Members and the State was entitled to send 9 members to the Council of States. The Congress party's quota was five members and I was one of the five. I was duly elected and in May 1952 the newly elected Parliament met. I went to Delhi two days before the opening of the Parliament and stayed at the Western Court. It is a most imposing building housing many of the members of the Parliament. I did not know any member except Shri C.C. Biswas who was also staying there. In course of time I met other members Srimati Violet Alva from Bombay, Srimati Lilavati Munshi from Bombay and U.P. Srimati Mona Hensman from Madras, Begam Aizaz Rasul from U.P. Pushpalata Das from Assam, Mayadevi Chattry from West Bengal and many others. Shri Biswas gave me and Mayadevi a lift in his car on the opening day. As we were late in arriving I found all the seats occupied. While looking for a seat, Shri Mahtab and Doctor Katju came out of their seats and talked to me. Shri Mahtab introduced me to Dr. Katju although there was no need to do so and said that I was 90 years old. Nobody would believe it and everybody laughed at the suggestion. In the meantime Panditji arrived and joined us and when he was told I was 90 yearss old he put his hand on my shoulder and said "I know Miss Das's

age. She is the oldest member of the House, and therefore the Grandmother of the House." From that day I was looked upon as Grandmother and everybody called me "Granny," although some of my Grandchildren have reached their biblical age of three score years and ten.

Before the President of the Republic arrived, I was able to find a seat somewhere. The opening of the Parliament was a great event and it was also a most imposing one. In the profound silence of the well-filled central hall, the President of the Republic, accompanied by the Speaker of the House of the People and the Chairman of the Council of States moved slowly to the platform and took his place in the chair. The address was delivered in both English and Hindi and took a litttle more than half an hour. Immediately after the President left the Hall while all of us stood and greeted him, we came home. Next day at 10 a.m. we were all sworn in. Thus began my two years of membership in the Council of States and Parliamentary life.

On the following day we began the debate on the President's address. Before the debate began the Chairman was felicitated and many members spoke on the occasion. I too wanted to say a few words but failed to catch the Chairman's eye. The debate on the motion of thanks to the President on his address was initiated by Dewan Chamanlal and seconded by Begam Aizaz Rasul. The Opposition started its volley of criticism. I did not like the stand taken by the Opposition nor did I understand why there should be so much discussion on the President's address which seemed quite a reasonable statement of policy. I was sitting on the Congress bench with my colleagues and we had a good view of the Chairman, Dr. S. Radha-Krishnan. The debate went on for three days when the general debate on the Railway Budget began with more talk and abuse by the Opposition and defence of policies of the Government by the spokesmen of the Treasury benches, involving enormous waste of public funds. By the end of June the session of the Council of States was adjourned and we did not reassemble till July.

We met again in July to continue the debate on the Budget. Shri Sundarayya, the leader of the Communist Party criticised the Government mercilessly on its industrial policy and made certain constructive suggestions as well. These latter related to the promotion and development of indigenous industries. I was quite in agreement with his views; so I left my seat and went to the Minister of Industry and Commerce who was sitting on the Treasury Bench and asked him how he liked Shri Sundarayya's speech. He simply said "Not bad." I asked: "Will you accept his constructive suggestions? If you do will you refer to them in your reply?" No doubt he was surprised at my boldness. As I was used to it I did not feel any nervousness in talking to him in the way I did. He then asked me if I would like to speak on the subject so that he should send my name to the Chairman. I pleaded ill health as I was far from well at that time and requested him to speak on my behalf. Then I asked him, "When you consider a speech good why can't you say yourself in your speech that you will consider the suggestions so that you may rise in the estimation of the Opposition. To err is human" I said "but to acknowledge one's mistake is a sign of greatness. So please do it." "Very good" he said and in his reply he made certain comments on the suggestions of the Opposition.

Owing to my indifferent and ill-health my participation in debates of the Council of States was limited to questions and two speeches. But I always took interest in the proceedings of the Council and the progress of the various Ministries. I used my time after the question hour to meet the Ministers and their deputies and give them my suggestions. As an experienced public worker and seasoned fighter, I knew perhaps better than many of my colleagues how to get things done. Personally I did not attach much value to making speeches, producing and repeating arguments and thus wasting public money. But I took great interest in sending questions which when asked and answered in the Parliament, focussed public attention and put the Ministry on the spot. And it is the

ambition of every Ministry to appear in their best colours, although they often fail miserably. The question hour is also the most exciting and interesting time when the House is always well attended.

Instead of covering the entire field of Government's activities I generally confined myself to questions relating to my State and such other subjects of vital interest to the people of our country, such as education, natural resources, rehabilitation, income tax, health and industrial development of course, whenever I could put in a supplementary question affecting the welfare of my State, I was alert enough not to miss the occasion. On two occasions, however I took part in the debate. These were on the Estate Duty Bill in 1953 and the Budget in 1954. As I am always in the habit of calling a spade a spade I did not hesitate to speak my mind as to the experience I had gathered in the House during the past two years of my membership in the Council of States, The two speeches given in the Appendix will show to the reader that I was not actuated by any malice, nor was I trying to carry favour with any party or individual. My sole object was to bring to the notice of the Government the honest opinion of a member, who sincerely felt that the Congress Party should not lose its ground but that it would go on losing its hold on the people if their sufferings are not alleviated in the quickest possible time, and the honesty of admiustration brought home to the people by the elimination of corruption. Although my speeches were delivered extempore they were the result of constant thought and concern for the welfare of our people, especially women and children. From the applause they evoked in the House it was evident they were appreciated.

All along my life I knew that more work could be done by tackling each problem separately and with the individuals. When the Commission for Secondary Education was appointed I was surprised to see that there was only one woman member. I approached Sri Kabir of the Education Ministry to appoint one more. Sri Kabir told me that Finance would not grant funds for that, but if I could persuade the Finance Minister he would certainly add another. I promised to get it done when he smiled

knowing that it would be tough job. One of Mr. Deshmukh's friends told me that he would be interested to know the result of the interview as he was sure it would not succeed. I was perfectly sure that I would be able to convince the Finance Minister and convert him to my views. So I made an appointment and went to see him. He said, on seeing me, that he was busy and would be able to give me only 15 minutes. But the interview lasted for an hour and fifteen minutes. I opened the conversation by saying "Mr. Desmukh, you are such a handsome man, why shouldn't you do—handsomely by women?'— He looked shy, smiled a little, perhaps surprised at the flattery coming from an old woman like me. But I am sure he liked it; and when I asked him why he did not grant funds to include another woman on the Commission, he said that Education Ministry did not press for a second woman and therefore it was wrong on their part to say that he did not allow it. He then said, "Why do you want to have a second woman member? Is it for equality?" I said "No, one woman's view may not be accepted, whereas there is every likelihood of the views of two women being considered." Then he asked me why I did not go to Mr. Tyagi who was then the Deputy Finance Minister. To which question I said, "When I can go to the fountain-head why should I go to the branch." We started on different topics and he was very curious to know how I came to know so much about departments and files. Indeed he seemed so interested that he made me talk to him for more than an hour when I gave him some of my experiences in the field of public work. He promised to help me with funds for an additional member for the Commission and asked me to get the Education Ministry to send a name. Thus I had my first interview with the Finance Minister which was a success. But then the Education Minister failed me; he did not want to reopen the subject, I do not know for what valid reasons. I had another interview with the Finance Minister immediately after my speech on the State Duty Bill. He congratulated me on my speech.

Now I want to say something about the Education Minister. He is an old man. He talks little and when he does

he talks in Urdu. I went to see him to get funds, as I wanted 2 lakhs of rupees for the construction of a hall for the Shoilabala Women's College which is the only State College for women in Orissa. After hearing me, he said in Urdu that it was impossible for Government to grant any funds for construction purposes. I went to him with such hopes, but hearing him I was heart-broken. I asked him if he could give me 15 minutes time to hear all about the state of girls' education in Orissa. I briefly narrated the history of the first girls' school, training institution and women's college which were sponsored by me under great difficulties. I told him that I was not a Congress party member but I made over my house as a gift to the Government. I asked him that if one woman could do so much for the State cannot she have any claim on the Centre for help? The old man said, "I am very pleased to learn of all your work. Ask your Government to make an application for 2 lakhs of rupees stating all your activities in the field of education". I thanked him for his sympathy and came away with great hopes. I at once wrote to my State Government to send an application immediately. But as it is, the State Government took 6 months to send an application and when Dr. S. S. Bhatnagar met me to discuss the point, he said he was sympathetic but could not find his way to provide money for construction. I told him that he was throwing cold water on my project instead of helping it, although the Minister himself was very sympathetic. He of course insisted that he was also sympathetic, but the Government cannot give grants to institutions of higher education except through the University Grants Commission. He however drafted a letter for me to send to the State Government, but our University made a mistake, did not put its claim strongly but in such a lukewarm fashion that nobody could give a grant of 2 lakhs on its letter. So it was through the fault of my State Government that I could not realise my dream.

I am very much interested in industries, not the big ones, but the cottage industries. My late father started many industries to help small craftsmen and ruined himself by handling such matters without Government support. Nevertheless I

was impressed by the need for developing them. In Cuttack there is Poor Cottage Industry started by a single individual. In this he utilised all village and waste products and made beautiful things which are useful and cheaper than what one gets in the market. He gets little support from the Government. As the man is old I felt that after his death his life-work will perish like my father's. So I wanted to help him and found that being a member of the Council of States I could help through the Ministers. I asked the Minister concerned either to take up the whole enterprise or give him a rolling capital of 30,000 rupees so that he could improve the industry. He said he would give me a reply after one week with regard to the capital and asked me to ask the proprietor of the concern to send an application through the State Government. But, my reader, I cannot make my State Government work faster than they are habituated. After a great deal of trouble, discussion and fighting, the application eventually reached the Centre and a sum of Rs. 45,000 was sanctioned; but to get this grant from the State Government took 6 months and the money was given on the last day of March. The Poor Cottage Industry is an institution where children can be well trained for their livelihood.

I took great interest in the income-tax administration. I found that returns were submitted three years back, orders were not passed. Thousands of cases were pending for want of Income Tax officers. I worried the Finance Minister with questions that he should send officers to finish arrears of work. I really feel glad that some of my lawyer friends were benefitted by my activities.

Whenever there is any problem in Orissa it was brought to my notice so that I may take it up with the Centre. In this way I had much pleasure in coming into contact with the various Ministers. On some occasions I gained my point. At other times I had to content myself with their agreement to consider them.

I can say without hesitation that during my 2 years in the Council, I have learnt many things and watched carefully the debates of the House as well. I felt the Council of States is only wasting money.

CHAPTER XI

ACTIVITIES INSIDE THE COUNCIL AND OUTSIDE

When I became a member of the Council of State, I was staying at Western Court, the caterer of the House came and asked me whether I had any fault to find with his food, and if not to sign my name in his book, though I was not quite pleased with the food yet I signed "No Complaint" as others did. Two weeks after, another caterer came to me and said that he was appointed Caterer of the Western Court, and had got an appointment letter from the Estate Officer on the strength of that appointment letter he had invested five to six thousand rupees in getting stores, crockery and appointment of servants. But four days before taking charge, he was told by the Estate office that his appointment was cancelled as the members of Parliament were satisfied with the old caterer, the man was in great distress as it meant a heavy financial loss to him. I felt the injustice of the case keenly. I took up his case to fight it out in the cause of justice. I wrote to the Estate Officer pointing out that as proper notice was not given to this man in due time cancelling the appointment, and as the man had invested a great deal of money, his appointment should stand, as otherwise I would take up his case to the Honourable Minister. As a result of my letter, the new Caterer was appointed. I have always found out that whenever, I approached the Head, I had no complaint to make and my prayer was always granted. Here is an incident with the Law Minister. From each State some Law Officers from the Secretariat were taken to the Centre for Training, my State (Orissa) had not been able to get its quota for a long time, I approached Sri C. C. Biswas the Law Minister, and he at once passed an order. A Mohomedan, from Orissa should have the next chance to come to the Centre for Training. Here is some interesting incidents with the Home Minister Sri Sirdar Sing. An old lady after getting an extension for a year to work in a Government Hostel was refused further extension. She was in distress and financially badly off, and to crown it all she had a dumb son on her shoulder, she came to

me to help her, I did not know how to help her. I know how to fight, but not to ask a favour. Here I was to ask a favour from our House Minister. The old lady started crying, but I told her I could not help her. However, in the end I promised to speak on her behalf to the Minister and get her the desired extension in her service. When I went to the Council I met Sardarji and told him he must help the "granny" by promising to give her what she wanted. He asked me "What is it?" I told him about this lady and asked him to give her an extension for a year. He said he was sorry as he was contemplating a young person in her place, but as I pressed the matter very much and would not take a refusal, he gave her an extension of 6 months. This made the old lady happy.

Now I must say something of my Railway Minister, who is a dear grand son, very simple and honest. When be came to Cuttack in the summer of 1954, I asked him to give me 25 free passes, for the girls of Shoila Bala College to travel to have experience and knowledge. The Railway Board refused by saying that the concession is already given to the school children. They can have a double journey by paying single fare and he asked me not to press him in this matter. But my reader when I make up my mind to get a thing for a good cause I do not like to take a refusal. So I told my Railway Minister, Sri Lal Behary Shastri that "Granny must have a special concession for her girls and you cannot refuse her." My reader what do you think? The dear Minister granted my request and his General Manager sent me 25 free passes. The Lady Principal made all arrangements to send our girls to Sindri, Chittaranjan and other places. My State Finance Minister, Sri Radha Nath Rath, who is also my grandson, sanctioned Rs. 2/- per head per day for each girl. The girls had 10 days outing. I was told by some important railway officials that never before such passes were given to anyone. During my 2 years in the Council of State there were many such small incidents.

During my two years in the Council of State I made two speaches one on the State Duty and the other during the Budget

Session. I criticised the panel of the Social Welfare Board and my suggestions were accepted and the State Social Welfare Board has been started where various Social Welfare Associations send their applications which are recommended to the Central Board for grants. My two speeches will be found in the Appendix of this Book.

I am at present living in Cuttack doing social work and feeling quite happy. I have re-purchased my house in Calcutta, where I thought I shall be quite happy with my relations, friends and old surroundings and with the memory of childhood which is always present and waiting for the boat to arrive to take me across the river. But a women proposes, but God deposes. Great trouble came from the unexpected quarter and made me feel remote, unfriended and sad.

CHAPTER XII

HOW I FULFILLED MY DESTINY

My Zodiacal sign extends from 21st of March to 20th of April and this sign is the first of fiery triplicity. I was born on the 25th March 1875. As my birth planet is Aries, according to the astrological surmise associated with my birth planet, it was prophesied that I would always be inclined to look forward to a better state of things and work hard for them. That I am very sensitive and impulsive. That I am original in my views and that influence of my sign endows me with great versatality and vivacity and that will make me popular.

My readers who have gone through my reminisences and have learnt the various activities of my life have seen how I have always given proof of enthusiasm, perseverance, execution and determination. The many changes which you have found in my life are the result of the rapid movement of my ruling planet Mars. As is natural to one who is born in my sign I have always been led to tell the plain truth on all occasions, although it might perhaps have been better to remain silent. Being a fluent

speaker and painstaking and earnest in all I did, I became quite popular among my friends and I valued friends as the years rolled on. It was prophesied that I would have a long life of three score of years and ten and even more if I lived carefully. I have now completed three score years and have added twen'y-one more years to it and I am still strong and hearty. Often I have fonnd in my life that I am at the same moment, guided by two different feelings. This according to the astrologer is due to the Sun and Moon which causes ebb and tide, having ascendency at the same time over my life. It was also predicted that I will have poor health, and I have had ample fulfilment of this. My destiny was to have friends of high social status and to have many enemies, mostly among women, who would cause much annoyance, but would not be able to do me any harm. This has been fulfilled in my life many a time. As Mars is my zodiacal ruler, I always fought for a cause and have never been defeated. It was my destiny to always retaliate when harmed, insulted or injured. This you have seen is most correct. You have found me retaliating many a time, though I should have guarded against this. It was destined that I should always be successful and have a good business head and will therefore never be in want. It is quite true that my brains have brought me success and I have never been in want.

My astrologer says that having completed three score years and ten I would go on to live till ninety if I make good use of my gifts and opportunities. I was advised to be true to myself. I have always tried to do this and thus I have fulfilled my destiny and shall be still fulfilling it till the end of my days.

CHAPTER XIII

"REMOTE, UNFRIENDED, MELANCHOLY, SLOW"

At the age of four score and two I feel remote from all that which made my life sweet, active and happy. Now when

I have nearly lost the sight of my eyes and cannot read and write properly, when my hands shake, my nerves are all bad, my heart is weak, my strength often fails and I feel lonely indeed, sitting in my own rooms at Madhu Smiriti from where my dear ones have gone before, their memories are only things left for me in the world. Looking around me I find the vast stretches of active life left behind and before me empty stretches, having travelled far far away from all that made for joy and happiness. I am alone still, fighting for a just cause, working for the good of others. Everything has gone out of my life leaving only memories behind. These bring melancholy and emptiness. The reminiscences of the past are always before me creating a big void and making me indeed feel remote, melancholy and unfriended. But in spite of these all, I thank God for all His manifold blessings in my life and His grace which upholds and strengthens me in my lonely old age. I still feel that life means work and work means life. So long as God keeps me here I believe He will give me strength to work.

CHAPTER XIV

WAITING FOR THE TOLLING OF THE BELL

At this advanced age one cannot but wait for the call from above, which no doctor or science can prevent. I do not know how long I shall have to wait for the tolling of the bell, but when it does toll, I hope I shall be ready for it. In the meantime let me continue to fulfil my destiny and do the work nearest at hand.

" Sunset and evening star and one clear call for me
And may there be no moaning of the bar when I put out to sea."

APPENDIX I

(Extracts from letters of Shri Madhusdan Das to his daughter Shoila Bala Das in England, 1906-07.)

PREFACE

A great mission of Mr. Das's life was to awaken the spirit of nationalism in the people of Orissa, and in this mission he believed his daughter could render him real help. With a view to equip her for this important yet difficult work he sent her to England when she was in weak health in September, 1906. The main object of her visit to England was to have an idea of the system of education followed there to equip women for their proper of activity in society. Her father was very fond of her and her indifferent health in a foreign country made him extremely anxious. The letters which he wrote to her were full of concern and advice and love for her. Each letter is a valuable gem, it is possible here to give only a few extracts.

Cuttack,
Orissa, India.
11th September, 1906.

First Letter

(This letter shows her father's anxiety on account of her health in not hearing from her the full account of her voyage).

My Darling Child,

I got your telegram from Aden at 2 a.m. of the 6th instant. I had no sleep that day. The expectation of getting news of you on the following day (for the steamer was due at Aden on the 7th) increased my anxiety and brought on sleeplessness. I got your wire, but it was a disappointment I lost my faith in the usefulness of Cook's Unicode. It is good for purposes of business, but is of no use where feelings are concerned. I was anxious to know (1) whether you were sea-sick, if so, whether the sea sickness prevented you from taking any food and drove you to starvation; (2) whether your general health has improved or gone down. These are questions which constantly rose and still rise before my mind and keep

up a high state of feverish anxiety which I fear I shall have to bear till I get your letter. I sent a wire to you to Port Said. I hope you will get it and I hope also you will adopt usual language in replying to it. . In future whenever you have occasion (which God forbid) to wire me about your health, please adopt plain language as will give me a definite idea of your ailments. When I wire to you to allay my anxiety even when such anxiety arises from mere imagination I beg of you not to keep me in the dark and not to give me any false information.

* * * *

I am anxious and will be anxious to know how the climate treats you and how the environments of your new student life and the demands of the College rules upon your time, attention and temperament harmonize with your preconceived ideas and ambition of that life.

* * * *

Write to me a full account of all you did during the voyage, of your journey across France, of your experience of English Channel which is an introduction to the restless energy which you find in the country whereto the Channel is the entrance. Don't forget to consult a good doctor, a specialist and let me know the result after you have tried his prescription and advice for a few days.

I am particularly anxious to see you healthy, for without good health and a strong and robust constitution my ambition regarding your useful life in my country will be worse than a hobby. This is my only ambition now and I pray to God to grant me this boon.

* * * *

Believe me
Your ever loving father

Second Letter

(Her father's humorous remarks on Cook's Unicode)

Cuttack,
Wedneseday, 19th Sept.
1906

I have been most anxious all this while. I got your wire this morning at 10 a m. You have treated me very badly. I expected to get a wire from Marseilles, that was the understanding, but evidently Chandra was right in his appreciation of your principles of economy. I expected the contents to be otherwise than I found them. I asked you most clearly, if not solicitously, to wire to me all about your health and address. Your wire dated yesterday morning has two words; the first is "Relix" and the other is "anxious." Your beloved code does not contain any word "Relix", it is probably "Pelix" the word I used in my wire to Port Said. Now you see my dear child you have less reason to be anxious for me than I on your account; I am in my old environments; whereas you are in a strange country among stangers with environments which are not in unison with the experiences of your whole life. I never had any faith in your unicode; it is a unique code to which the keys of human language can furnish no accomplishment. Messrs. Thomas Cook and Sons must have found the materials for their code, among the debris of the linguistic structure raised by our ancestors at Babel. My experience of to-day compels me to ask, request, beseech and entreat you not to use that Code unless you wish to punish me and even in that case I would prefer the Penal Code, as that is based on known logical principle.

Your ever loving father

Third Letter

Calcutta
Grand Hotel,
20th September, 1906

My darling Shoila,

I know what a bad correspondent I am and how I do my best to avoid correspondence by telegram, but I have not the same feeling in your case now. I feel I could write to you a great deal more. When I begin to write I find my mind is crowded with thoughts but when I think of the distance between us 99 per cent

of these thoughts appear unfit for communication as they are sure to grow unpalatable by the time they reach you, as would be a parcel of Jilipi, in response to your craving for hot Jilipis. You must be prepared for only such news as would keep long and won't get spoiled.

From your wire it seems the India Office have selected Maria Grey's Training College. I am very glad to hear it. Your College reopened yesterday and I suppose you three were there. It is difficult to picture to myself the wonder, astonishment and the curiosity which your presence among a number of English girls must have created among them. I would not be surprised if one of them reenacted the part of the boy who on hearing the first Indian Visitor to England (Raja Ram Mohan Roy) address a meeting exclaimed with a wonder-depicted face (such as a Punch artist alone could sketch) "Hallo, he speaks." I should not be surprised if some of your would-be fellow students feel a similar wonder. My dear child, remember your duty to your mother country. Do everything you can to impress all those you come in contact with, whether as friends, or as playmates, or as fellow students or as mere visitors that the Indian women possess the virtues of her sex in a degree which the English woman would do well to learn from her. Love, kindness, forbearance, charity are par excellence womanly virtues. Religion is her special sphere. In India she has upto this moment held the strongholds of superstition against the attacks of Buddhism, Mohammadanism, all-ism and no-ism. That shows her social and religious strength. Let your life shine there. In my old age I indulge in fond hopes which would appear absurd to others, but to you my sweet child they should be no secrets. May it be your share in life to elevate the Indian woman in the eyes of England. They have an idea that we treat our women as servants because they do not join us at dinners, do not take the prominent position which hostesses have in European Society. But this is a false picture which the disordered Camera of missionary reports produces. In the East the idea of honour is associated with humility and power belongs to the unostentatious. These principles, are enclosed as it were in a nut-shell in Christ washing the feet of his disciples. The European often defends

woman's position in social economy by the remark that the mistress of a house takes the important position because her husband gives it to her. This is a most fallacious argument. I give here the refutation of the argument.

(1) Supposing the husband gives it, the wife would not take it if she understood the value of humility, if she understood that real power resides below the surface unnoticed. The root of a tree which feeds the tree lies below. The power of gravitation resides away from the surface of the earth. The Almighty Power is beyond the horizon of human vision.

(2) The disciples of Christ wanted to wash Christ's feet, but he did not allow them. My own opinion is that England has not yet learnt to give woman the position which the mother of a nation ought to have.

The Englishman does not give the same honour to his mother and sister and daughter that he gives to his wife. This would not be so if the position of woman were rightly understood. In India the mother stands much higher than the wife. I want you to think over these matters.

As regards dress etc. avoid anything which lends to point to vanity. It is necessary in a foreign countrv to establish your respectability by dressing according to your position in the beginning. Plain dress should be used on subsequent occasions. For once your respectability is established plainness brings more honour than show.

There have been Sutee in India, but treatment like that accorded to Joan of Arc was never an Indian woman's share.

I have written to you a long letter and I hope you will not blame me for inflicting lectures on you.

With love and my blessings
Your loving
Father

Fourth Letter

(The following extract is from his letter of 23rd September 1906 that he was most anxious about his daughter's health, he was full of his usual wit and humour and writes most humorously about the High Court Judges, who were travelling with Miss Das on the same boat. There were about seven or eight of them and they all knew Miss Das and her father well.)

Cuttack,
23rd September, 1906

Dearest Child,

I have been amused by your remarks about the *physical jurisdiction* of the High Court Judges. I don't know whether the expression I have used is sufficiently significant. I should perhaps say muscular jurisdiction. Their work is practically an easy one, if not a pleasant one. It resembles the feat of the voracious eater, who has spread out before him a large table elaborately laden with dishes of all kinds, good bad and indifferent which a dozen of cooks have worked hard to produce.

The positition of a High Court Judge reminds me of the Ex-King of Oudh who had at dinner time daily brought before him hundreds of dishes served before him. These dishes were cooked by his 250 wives. It was his pleasant duty to select some out of these numerous dishes and he claimed and got more credit for this than his wives got for cooking them. The lawyers place before the judge all the facts and law connected with a case and his duty is to select and swallow some and let alone the rest. But he claims great credit for this, and in this respect he is worse than the Ex-King of Oudh, for the latter fed and clothed his wives and therefore in some sense his arrogance was pardonable, whereas a Judge does not do any such thing to a lawyer. This makes his conduct the more unpardonable. Even in this easy work of selection he errs and swallows stuff which he cannot digest and the appellate Court has to administer reproof of a very bitter kind.

Your ever affectionate
Father

Fifth Letter

The following extracts from his letter of the 20th October, 1906 give valuable advice to his daughter with regard to her studies and life in England and as to what should be her aims to realise the mission of her life).

Cuttack
The 20th October

Dearest Shoila,

As regards your education I should like you to learn the methods of teaching. It will be an immense gain if you can also add to your store of knowledge. If all the women of our country knew what you know we would have been a very different nation. Our educated ladies do not know to teach others of their sex what they know. Unless one knows the methods of teaching, she does not take an interest in the dissemination of her knowledge.

I have been very much interested in your description of the method of teaching followed there. I am glad you value and wish for a return of childhood to have the benefit of the system. I am really happy that you have these thoughts. That assures me of your appreciation of my object in sending you to learn these methods for the good of our country and gives me the further assurance that you will pay attention to them.

It should be your aim to have a good reputation there. One thing you must guard against in that country and that is giving airs. The Englishman hates pride. He will not have over-bearing manners even from Edward VII and yet will do anything for a humble and weak person. You have ample proof of it in the way they value Christ's character, *He was meek as a lamb*, remember this always in your conduct with people.

Last night I have given most serious thoughts to the question of your residence in England. I imagined myself in your position and I shall tell you what I would have done. The first question I would have asked myself is—Can I after having been my master for so many years *descend* to the level of the disciplined life of a student? I would not have allowed my mind to deceive me in the

hasty excitement and momenatry zeal for intellectual improvement. I would have calmly considered the conditions under which intellect-tual growth is possible. Is it not a fact that the children of the rich are always failures? Why is this? The surroundings are not favourable to intellectual growth. University education in India has been a failure. The result in the English Universities is very different. In our recent attempts to improve the education of our youths the greatest stress has been laid on hostels. That is an important factor in the life of a student. The company of fellow students is a valuable stimulant in student life. Man cannot thrive in water. Fish cannot grow on dry land. The reason in both cases are unsuitable surroundings. We all draw our substance from the surroundings of our life. This is as true of moral and intellectual life as it is of physical life.

If a student spends most of his time or at least any appreciable portion of his time among people whose aim of life, however student-like in College days, is otherwise at the moment when the student seeks their company, such student is sure to go adrift from the moorings of a student. Then if I could not make up my mind to submit to or to take cheerfuliy to my new surroundings I would have abandoned the idea of study. I would not have given my new friends in a foreign country to understand that I came to learn, for I would fall very much in their estimation if I changed from a student visitor to England to a mere sight-seer. If *my students* were poor, I would have considered it an advantage and would have made most of my advantage. I would have said to myself they are poor, but they are all intellectual, all graduates and to live two years amongst these persons, is like what living among the hills of Himalayas is to a man of the plains. I should have enjoyed the mountain air of these intellectual peaks, filled my lungs with the healthy mountain air. If the hills were bare, poor in ornaments of nature, forests and trees, I would have considered it an advantage as giving me an unobstructed view of the whole hill, as giving me easy access to every part, as giving me opportunities of examining the bare soil on which in the older hills in the same chain, tall majestic pines and oaks rear their proud heads to the clouds and I would have taken precious notes of the value of the soil.

Your loving father,

Sixth Letter

The extract from his letter of the 20th February, 1907 tells his daughter not to be under too much obligation to any one, without making suitable material expressions, of one's appreciations.

Darling Child,

I am writing to the Political A.D.C Sir Curzon Wyllie and also to Lady Wyllie, Sir Albert and Lady Spicer, Lady Blliot Miss Samuel and Mr. Ashton thanking them for all their kindness to you. It is not desirable to carry too heavy a load of obligations in a foreign country. You are a weak little girl, unable to bear too much burden of any kind. I believe you have some Cuttack-made filligree things that will be acceptable as presents. I am also sending you some silver things by today's mail. Try to acknowledge obligations not only in words but also in suitable material expressions of the feelings. The Bnglishmen is a materialist, he believes in material embodiment of feelings. Feelings are worth nothing if they do not find expression in overt acts. They resemble clouds surcharged with water but do not rain. Peelings are nothing. They are fountains of action and if they do not find their way out they are dead springs. I am glad you are going to be presented to Court by Lady Spicer. Please give me a full account of the function.

Your loving father.

Seventh Letter

Extract from his letter of the 10th April, 1907.

My Darling Child,

I owe an apology and an expression of regret for not having thought of you on your birthday. It is not correct to say that I did not think of you on the 25th of March, but I did not remember that that was your birthday. Not a day passes wherever I am when I do not think of you at least twenty times. I may truly in the word of the poet say " Wherever I am whatever realms to see, my heart untramelled fondly turns to thee."

B

But you know my darling child I do not attach any importance to expression of feelings on particular occasions. They are like occasional thunder storms which are good when the atmosphere is charged with unhealthy gases, but a healthy atmosphere which maintains an equably healthy atmosphere does not require these occasional storms.

These occasional out-bursts of good feelings are valuable when they come from friends who have no occasion to remember you everyday. If I had remembered the day as your birthday I don't know whether I would have sent you a present, but I would have wished you many returns of it. This I do now and in doing so I wish you still longer life for to wish you many returns of *20th* April means the wish for a longer life than a wish for the return of the 25th March would mean.

I hope you will accept this.

Your loving father.

Eighth Letter

In his letter of the 17th April 1907 he tells her what she would speak of India in the meeting of the Drawing room of the Duchess of Warwick where she had been asked to say a few words on "India." It runs thus:—

My Darling Child.

You have been asked to speak of India. That is a big subject. You should speak mostly about Christianity and its influence in India, don't trespass in political grounds. It is dangerous and requires great tact. You should begin by referring to the great interest the Christian public in England have always shown in the well-being of the Indians. England has spent millions in her attempts to preach Christianity in India and it must be no small source of disappointment to the numerous men and women who have given their their money and energy in the cause, to find that an inappreciable portion of the population of India have accepted Christianity to this day. It is true that there is a large Christian population in India; it is much larger than it was a quarter of a

century ago; but then the population of India has increased and I and I should think that the proportion of the Christian to the non-Christian has not gained to an appreciable extent. If we add to this the fact that the Christian population has increased by birth, there is not much to congratulate ourselves on the result if we measure the results by numerical strength of the Christian population. But to count conversion by heads is not the right way to estimate the labours of those interested in Mission work. The man who works in the field to prepare the soil is engaged in a more important work than the labourers who gather the corn. The man who is engaged in teaching the youngman is engaged in a more responsible work than the man who presents the successful candidate for a degree at the Convocation. The man who breaks down and levels to the ground the fortifications which form the works of the defence of a town is deserving of more honour than the man who unfurls the national flag of the victorious army after the town is captured.

There is no doubt that the spread of English literature, Western thought and the direct teaching of the Bible have done much to prepare the minds of the nation to receive Christ at a future date. It is impossible for an Indian to dissociate Christ from all that is good and noble in English literature and history. Had not Christianity come to England, England would not have been what she is to-day. Europe is what Christianity made it. All that is good and noble in England has Christianity at its root. Take your early public instructions. The University and other seats of learning were founded from religious motives. Whatever might be said of their present management and objects, an enquiry into their origin reveals Christ. We Indians have seen the influence of Christ in everything connected with the English nation. Christianity has moulded character of the English nation. It is impossible for an Indian to contemplate England without Christ as its architect. But the Englishman in his life, in his teachings, in his relations with the Indians repudiates any connection with Christianty. The Lecturer in the Government College wishes his pupils to study English, History, English Literature, English politics as having no connection with Christ. The civilian in his work of administration disavows all connection with Christianity as if he happens to be a

Christian in faith, but in the discharge of his official duties, he feigns the life of a non-christian and he has not the courage of an avowal of his Christian principles. I do not wish that he should enforce his Christian principles on Hindus and Muhammedans, he need not force his Christian principles down the throats of his non-Christian sub-ordinates and subjects, but he certainly can give expression to his sense of disapproval of that which is revolting to Christian principles. Very often his conduct is censurable judged by universal principles of morality in a position of authority, placed beyond the power of correction by those whom his conduct affects. The people consider his censurable life as the result of growth amidst Christian enviroments. People think and say this is the result of Christian education in a Christian Country.

Missionaries out in India do not consider it any part of their duty to exercise their influence over the lives of officials. The two communities live apart as far from one another as do the natives apart from Europeans. Both are engaged in raising India to the rank of a civilised country. The work of one is as important as the other. It is impossible for any country unless it believes in and practices the cardinal principles of Christianity. The recent achievements of Japan in the sphere of warfare have sometimes been cited to prove that it is possible for a non-Christian nation to be great. But who argue this, forget that the principles of Christianity are dear to every Japanese. The Japanese. are Buddists and Buddha is an eminent illustration of life of self-denial and humility. To profess Christianity as one's faith is not to appreciate the principles of Christianity. A man might not be baptized and he might have a keen sense of appreciation of the Christian principles; on the other hand, a man might be baptized a Christian and yet might believe in principles which are not deducible from the life of Christ. The two cardinal virtues which stand out prominently in the life of Christ are humility and readiness to forgive, Christ washing the feet of his disciples and praying for the forgiveness for those who crucified him are the two events which appeal most to the Eastern mind. Self-denial enters into both of these as an important factor. The Indian has been accustomed to believe in a thousand incarnations of the Deity. There are so many avatars; Ram, Krishna, Chaitanya are all

incarnations. An incarnation is an act of condescension on the part of the Divine Being. God is worshipped and feared when he is in heaven but He is loved when He comes down to meet man on earth. It is love mingled with reverence, but devoid of the feeling of fear. Comparing man or rather referring to human nature for the sake of illustration Her Gracious Majesty, the late Queen Victoria is loved most when we hear of visits to the cottage of some poor woman or of her kindness of a personal character to some poor man or woman.

With love and good wishes,

Your loving father.

APPENDIX II

Address

by

Srimati Shoila Bala Das

on the occasion of

The opening of

Shoila Bala Women's College

ON THE 28th APRIL 1952

at

MADHU SMRITI

The residence of

Late Sri Madhu Sudan Das, C.I.E.

HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER AND FRIENDS;

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to Madhu Smriti which was my late father's residence. Here on this ground more than a hundred meetings, At Homes, Evening and Garden Parties were held in the past, to bring the problems of Orissa to the notice of the then Government and high officials and other distinguished persons visiting Cuttack. For fifty years it was a one man's show and that one man never grudged to give his time, his labour, and to spend his money like water for the uplift of the people of Orissa and for the amalgamation of the States. Here on this ground the birth of the first National Life of Orissa took place. The development of various industries also started here. The Prajabandhu Sabha was started. The weaving of Khaddar was introduced in this place, and here the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Sir John Woodburn, had addresses from my father's 200 workmen and shook hands with each of them. This ground was the scene of various activities, all for the uplift of Orissa. So this place is sacred to the memory of my father, and here I welcome you all this evening.

I shall now tell you about three things:

(1) My connection with Madhu Sudan Das

(2) History of this House

(3) The reason of my gift of Madhu Smriti to the women of Orissa.

(1) My connection with Madhu Sudan Das:

My own father and Madhu Sudan were fellow students in the London Mission College, Calcutta. They were both Hindus and occupied the same room in the Hostel. They both embraced Christianity the same day, in the same Church, and by the same Clergyman. Both of them lost their ancestral property. They were great friends and their friendship was based on religion. It therefore lasted throughout their lives, and I am the product of that friendship. Madhu Sudan married a Bengali lady. My father brought his Hindu wife to his house from her village home where I was born and I was loved even then by Madhu Sudan and his wife who wanted to adopt me then. But my parents would not agree to it. I came to Madhu Sudan's house at Cuttack with my parents in 1890. Again Madhu Sudan asked my parents to give me to him to adopt. I do not know why he preferred me to my other brothers and sister or girls of his own Province. Perhaps because I was a chatterbox and boldly expressed my opinions even at that early age and therefore he took a fancy to me, thinking he would mould me according to his ideas. After my mother's death we brothers and sisters came to live with him permanently. He educated me, sent me to England, gave me his name, so that I may be known to everybody as his daughter. Since then I have been known here and abroad and was presented at Their Majesties' Court in London in 1907 as the daughter of Madhu Sudan Das, and was the first Indian lady to be presented in a 'sari' for which the Court regulations had to be changed for me.

After my return my father wanted me to take up the education of the girls of the Province. The first Girls' High School was started by me, in 1908, which is the present Ravenshaw Girls'

School. It was made over to Government in a flourishing condition in 1913 and it was remarked by the then D.P.I. of the Government that "it represents the first really successful effort in the way of Oriya female education." In 1914, through my effort at the Female Education Conference convened by the Government at Ranchi, the first State Scholarship was created by Government and Miss Nirmala Nayak was the recipient of that Scholarship, and after her return she became the Lady Principal of my School. The Training School for Hindu widows was started by me at Government expense, and through my effort I.A. classes were attached to the Girls' High School, which is the nucleus of the present Women's College. The dream which I had in 1908 that the girls of the Province will have College education and have the same facilities as in other Provinces has been fulfilled. My father was greatly pleased with all my activities towards the education of girls of this Province. During my stay of twelve years in Patna, which was then the Capital of Orissa I was actively engaged in various educational activities. I feel great satisfaction and pride that all my work has been crowned with success. Through the blessing of my father, though I am not his natural daughter, yet I was more than a daughter to Madhu Sudan Das. Living in the house as his daughter for the last 55 years I did more work for the country he loved than any natural daughter could have done and he wrote to me once that the greatest love I could show him was to dedicate my life for the service of his country. I did it and this made him happy at his death-bed and he blessed me. It was the great ambition of his life that his daughter would devote her life for the service of the women of his Province. And whether I have been able to discharge this sacred mission of his life will be judged by posterity.

(2) History of the House:

In 1890 when I came here for the first time I saw this house being built. In 1892 Madhu Sudan came to live in this house and in 1896 it became my home. We two sisters and brothers learnt many lessons from that great man. His life was a daily lesson to us. My real education which has equipped me for various activities took place in this house,—at the dining table, in his drawing room, in his office room, and even in his bedroom where he rested before

retiring for the night. Whenever he talked to us he would always give his advice. Thus we learned the great lesson of self-sacrifice and service for the country from this great man.

He started various industries in this house and his industrial concerns made him a beggar. Though he earned like a Prince, he spent like a Prince. His only aim was to develop the industries of his country so that the workmen would earn more. But a man with a limited income cannot go on as he went on. There must be a crash. He incurred debts. This house was mortgaged to the Maharaja of Parlakimedi. At the latter part of his life he was greatly involved and in trouble. His Cuttack Tannery, which was valued by Government of Bengal at five lakhs of rupees, fetched only Rs. 50,000 in the auction sale and that ruined him completely. I requested some of our Oriya friends to buy Madhu Smriti House which was going for a mere song. But nobody came forward to buy this house and allow Madhu Sudan to live in this house even though we offered to pay rent. So we two sisters and my late brother C. K. Hazra by the sale of our ancestral house in Calcutta and by my brother's earning bought this house at the Court sale for Rs. 20,000/-. A few years after Madhu Sudan's death some people sent a resolution to Government that this house should be taken from me to make a memorial for Madhu Sudan who was a lion among men. It surprised and amused me that when the lion was made to leave his den, no one came forward to give shelter to the lion. Had it not been for his Bengali daughter and her relations, the lion would have been shelterless. More than three times I asked Government to take over this house to start industrial and educational work in memory of Madhu Sudan, but it could not be done for want of funds.

Gift of Madhu Smriti to the Women of Orissa:

Last year my house was going to be acquired by Government but I was determined that without my consent none should be able to take possession of my house. Government dropped the project. I then offered my house to the Chief Minister, the Hon'ble Sri Naba Krishna Chaudhuri, as a gift to Government. The Chief Minister gladly accepted my offer and proposed that the Women's

College, which was without a house, may be housed in Madhu Smriti. I welcomed the proposal, as no scheme could have been better than to have a Women's College in the house where I was educated and equipped for the work and service of the country. I asked the Chief Minister, who is present here and can verify my statement to call this Women's College the "Madhu Sudan Women's College." But he told me Government in recognition of all my past services in the cause of women's education have already given it my name and this cannot be changed. He also said this was the most fitting place where there will be Shailabala Women's College and it will be associated with Madhu Sudan's name and the front pillars at the gate will always bear Madhu Sudan's name for posterity to know that this is Madhu Sudan's house. It was one of the great missions of Madhu Sudan's life that women should be educated, for without well educated mothers a country can never go ahead It gives me great pleasure that this Bengali daughter who bears his name, and as his daughter saved this house to preserve the memory of the great man in Orissa and has made a gift of her house in his memory for whom nothing was done by his own country men. My late sister Sudhansu Bala, who bought his valuable Law Library at the auction sale, preserved the memory of this great lawyer of Orissa by making a free gift of that Library to the first High Court in Orissa, where a Madhu Sudan Library has been established and the portraits of the donor and Madhu Sudan were hung up by the then Chief Justice, Sri B. K. Ray, and I am thankful to him for preserving my father's memory at the High Court. I also thank him for helping me to preserve the memory of my father in this house.

I also thank the Chief Minister, Sri Nabakrishna Chaudhuri for helping me to preserve the memory in the house of this great leader of Orissa, who was the maker of New Orissa and the father of Oriya Nationalism. After his death a great many meetings were held and many proposals were made to have a suitable memorial for Madhu Sudan, but in the last eighteen years since his death nothing substantial has been done by the people of Orissa. I take this opportunity to thank our popular Chief Minister for helping me to make a gift of this historic house to the women of Orissa. It was he who would not allow Government to acquire this house

and it was through him that the acquirement notification was withdrawn. It was he whose appreciation and help made it possible for me to finalise the scheme so quickly. His Chief Secretary, Sri B. Mukherji, also took great trouble and interest in the project and brought it to a successful finish and I thank him for it. Government machinery moves very slowly, but through his efforts it moved like an express train. Both he and the Chief Minister have spared no trouble and money to make me comfortable in my quarters in this house where I shall live till my death.

I must not leave out the Secretary of the Education Department, Sri R. Sarangi. He had to draft and redraft this deed-of-gift many a time, until I accepted it I thank him and the Director of Public Instruction and the Lady Principal of the College. All of them took great interest in the project and helped me in every way.

I think I shall not be doing justice if I fail to appreciate and give thanks for the work done by the P.W.D. Everyone of that Department, including the Executive Officer, Engineers, Overseers and staff did their utmost to have the building completed in so short a time. The P.W.D. gets a bad name everywhere, but in this case they did the work very well and satisfied even me, who am not easy to be satisfied. Last but not least comes the Contractor who did his share and carried out all my instructions even to his loss at times, remarking that when I could have made such a gift to the nation, he did not mind giving his little.

I think the spirit of Madhu Sudan was on them all and made them do their best.

A Museum consisting of two rooms where Madhu Sudan lived and died and containing some of the things used by him and also some articles made in his workshop are included in the gift of Madhu-Smriti. It is to be maintained by the College and will be under the supervision of the Lady Principal after the death of the donor.

A Madhu-Smriti Gift Committee has been formed and I thank the members for agreeing to serve on it. I am sure they will do their duty in maintaining the terms of the gift.

In conclusion I would request the Government to fulfil the requirements of a First Grade College for women. This being a residential house naturally many things are lacking, *e.g.*, an Assembly Hall, Library and Hostel and more classrooms. These should be provided to make the College worthy of the name of the great man in whose house it is located.

I hope the girls who are to be educated here and who are to be the mothers of the future generation will always bear in mind that the house belongs to the man who gave his life in the service of Orissa, and they would also dedicate their lives to the service of their Motherland.

APPENDIX III

Speeches on State Duty at Delhi

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS : (ORISSA) Mr. Chairman, Sir, the unique character of the Bill inspires me to speak a few words. Before I begin, I wish to congratulate our Finance Minister on having piloted this Bill so ably in the House of the People and on having brought this Bill to this House. Though this Bill has taken a long time to travel to this House, yet I feel that it is better late than never and the Hon'ble Finance Minister has earned our thanks. Those who know our Finance Minister, I am sure, will agree with me and will appreciate the truth of my saying that he is most zealous of his exchequer. He is never satisfied unless he finds that his exchequer is full. Therefore his calculative brain finds out new sources, if I may say so, a new avenue to collect revenue for his exchequer. Look at the taxes that we have to pay him, Income-Tax, Super-Tax, Sales-Tax, Excise-Tax and various other taxes too numerous to enumerate. Not only that, we have also to satisfy him by paying taxes on our daily food. But one thing is in his favour, Sir, and that is that he is most generous in exempting the Members of Parliament from assessing any tax on the speeches which we make on the floor of this House, and for this act of generosity we are very thankful and grateful to him, but, Sir, he is never satisfied! He wants his exchequer to be full. Therefore only the other day he has taken a loan of Rs. 75 crores but it has not satisfied him and he wants now an Estate Duty. During our life-time we try to satisfy him by paying all sorts of taxes and now, when we die, he does not like that we should escape him.

AN HON. MEMBER: You must try not to die.

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS: He does not wish that we should escape him and therefore out of our life's hard earnings that we accumulate, he wants a share from our successors after our death. This imposition, Sir, I call as Death Duty. Whether living or dying we must satisfy our Finance Minister.

SHRI M. C. SHAH: And get certificate for Heaven.

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS: But, Sir, we should not grudge to pay him his taxes, as we know this is for the welfare of the State and for this reason, I whole-heartedly support this Bill.

Now, Sir, he says that the principal object of the bill is two-fold, one of which is to find funds for the development of the country. I don't know how far this objective will be reached. It will be seen by the progress made hereafter. The second objective is, as he says, that he wants to bring down the rich people to the level of the middle-classes. Here also I find, perhaps he will be a little disappointed. But he has not mentioned the third objective which I find is—if I am not mistaken—to do away with the joint family system.

Now Sir, though this Bill has taken a long time to come to this House, yet there were people such as landlords, Ex-Rulers, business magnates, and rich people who knew that the Bill was coming and I presume, Sir, that they have taken good care to remove their valuable movable properties in the shape of hard cash, gold, jewellery and other valuables to foreign countries, and our Finance Minister will not be able to tax them because they are beyond his reach and other people possibly have taken their valuable properties underground and even the experts of Government surveyor will not be able to lay their hands on such properties and our Finance Minister may be disappointed in not getting the maximum from the rich except on the immovable property. As regards the levelling of the various classes of people, you all know that the rich will never come down to the level of the middle-class people. They know and they are quite expert at dodging and evading the law. Therefore our Finance Minister will not be able to do much with them but the real hardship will be felt by the middle class people and by the members of the joint families.

Sir, I have not gone through this Bill as I should have done, because this Bill I got only yesterday and therefore I will not go into its intricate points. I will only make certain general observations. For the purpose of the administration of this Act we find there are authorities and the Finance Minister mentioned that they were the Controller of the Estate Duty and a Board. Now I would like to say a few words about this authority. You all know that when a person dies, if he leaves some valuable property and when the Estate Duty is imposed by the Controller of Estate Duty, there may be hardship felt by the successor. He may not be satisfied with the assessment made by the Controller. He would like to have a rebate. Therefore I find that in the Bill

there is provision saying that appeals can be made to the Board. But, Sir, you all know that the Board and the Controller of Estate Duty form the two links of the same machinery and as such, the necessary relief may be found very difficult to obtain at the hands of the Board. Then there is another thing, that when a person is thus affected, he can move the High Court or the Supreme Court. But it is well known that such courts will not or may not entertain questions involving only facts. They generally deal only with questions of law and therefore here also the necessary relief may not be found by the successor. So what is he to do? He must have confidence in the authority and at the same time he must have justice. Therefore, may I suggest that the formation of an independent body like the Tribunal of the Income-Tax Department which can really function without let or hindrance and they will not be influenced by any outside interest Therefore if such a body is formed, I am sure, people will think that they are going to have justice. It is not sufficient that justice has been done but, Sir, it is essential that the person who has to pay the taxes must be made to feel that justice has been done and this can only be provided by an independent body like the Tribunal.

Now, I wish to say a few words about the valuers. I find the valuer will be an independent person. So far so good. The valuers will be needed for the purpose of valuing the immovable property only. Without valuing the immovable property, the Estate duty cannot be levied. May I make a suggestion here that instead of a valuer, if you take the market value of such immovable property situated within a Municipality or Corporation or Local Board and fix at 10 times or 15 times or even 20 times the latest value of such property as fixed by the Municipality, Corporation or local Board, there will be no necessity to have a valuer, and besides if you have a valuer his opinions will always be subject to dispute in the law courts.

Therefore, I submit that if this measure is adopted then much unnecessary litigation, waste of time and money on both sides and nepotism, corruption and bribery could be eliminated.

It further strikes me that if a valuer values the property at a certain value and if the person who is responsible for paying the duty fails to pay it, then it becomes necessary that the property should be sold. But as you know, Sir, when a property is sold

you can never get the value put upon it by the valuer, by selling the property. Here, I may give you a concrete instance in which I was personally interested. A property worth Rs. 5 to 6 lakhs had to be auctioned. It became necessary that property should be sold in order to pay the dues. This property was valued at about Rs. 5 lakhs by the Government. But when it was auctioned you would be surprised to hear that it fetched only Rs. 50,000/-. Why? Simply because there was no person to bid more, there was no money to buy this property. Therefore you must remember this common feature that the value of a property rises and falls according to the circumstances prevailing at the time and the circumstances of the seller and the buyer. And in this case, when the property has to be sold for realising the Estate duty, naturally the value of the property will go down. The owner will never get the price fixed by the valuer. Therefore, it is better that when Government wants the Estate duty to be realised on the property, the Government themselves should buy the property and pay the estate duty which they charge on it and pay the balance to the owner of the property.

Next I would like to say one or two words about gifts. Clauses 8, 9 and 10 of the Bill deal with gifts and there are two kinds of gifts for which time-limit has been prescribed. I would like to say that on gifts for charity, there should be no time limit and no estate duty should be levied on such gifts.

SHRI RAJAGOPAL NAIDU (MADRAS): Yes, if they are *bona-fide* gifts.

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS: We all know, Sir, in our country many people on their death-bed give away large sums of money as gifts, for the improvement of the village, for creating endowments, for the establishment of colleges and schools, hospitals, *Dharmsalas* and so on and if an estate duty is extracted on the charity of his predecessor, it will create hardship for the successor. Government realises that it is its primary duty to establish colleges, schools, hospitals and other such institutions. So when a private individual makes a gift for the above-mentioned charitable purposes, the Government should welcome the move in that direction and should not levy any tax on such a charity, simply because the man died before six months were over. Therefore, I again leave it for the consideration of the Hon. Finance Minister whether it is desirable that he should levy any tax on a charity of this nature and I also suggest that there should be no time-limit for them.

In the case of relatives, I find that if any person dies before 2 years, then he need not pay any estate duty. But as we all know, men are very fond of their money and, therefore, during their life-time they do not wish to part with the money. They want to give a large share of it to their relatives and they do it in their will. But they do not know when they will die and so they do not do it early enough. Therefore I put it to the Hon. Minister that the time limit should be curtailed and instead of 2 years, the period should be fixed as one year. I do not know whether he is going to accept my proposal, but all the same, I would like to say what I feel about it.

Then I find that residential houses are included for the determination of estate duty and this, I feel, is not fair. I feel that the residential houses should be absolutely excluded for the purpose of computation of the estate duty.

KHWAJA INAIT ULLAH (BIHAR): Up to Rs. 1 lakh it is excluded.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FINANCE (SHRI M. C. SHAH): The exemption limit is Rs. 1 lakh, including residential houses.

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS: You know that many middle-class people build their houses for the purpose of living in and when they die—I refer to middle-class people— they hardly leave any cash or anything for the successors; and many people find it difficult to live in the big house and they generally let it out, certain rooms at least, to pay the Municipal taxes and also in order to maintain the family. The Hon. Finance Minister wants to extract the estate duty on residential houses above the valuation of Rs. 1 lakh, because he has given the exemption limit as Rs. 1 lakh, not for residential houses, but for all. Therefore, if the value of the house is above Rs. 1 lakh and the person has no money to pay the duty then what will happen? The house must be sold or be mortgaged to pay the estate duty. But what will happen to the family? They will be rendered homeless and be stranded on the road. Is it the intention of the Hon. Finance Minister that these middle-class families should thus be stranded on the road? I am sure this is not his intention. Therefore, I am putting it before him and I am suggesting that residential houses should be exempted from this tax. But at the same time, Sir, I feel it will not be fair for him and for me to ask him to exclude all residential houses, because residential houses are of different values. So I would

like to propose that residential houses up to the value of Rs. 1 lakh should be exempted so that people who have got no money but their residential houses can let out some of the rooms and at the same time live in the house.

There are also, I find, certain minor exemptions given. I was especially pleased to find that the Finance Minister has fixed an exemption limit of Rs. 50,000 for joint Hindu families and for others he has raised it to Rs. 1 lakh.

That is a great change that I see. Then, there are certain exemptions and I do not like to talk about all excepting about the burial. Christians, as you know, bury their dead, and for that purpose, Sir, a plot of land is required where the body can be interred. In towns, the price of land has gone up very high and to get a plot of land you have to pay very high prices. The place where you bury your dead must be a pucca grave and that also costs money. After a year, you may want to have it properly made by putting marble slabs all round or putting mosaic work and a cupola or some small monument. All these cost much. Therefore, I leave it for the consideration of the Finance Minister as to whether he could possibly increase the burial expenditure at least by a thousand rupees more.

Then, Sir, in clause 55, I find that all persons having property shall deliver an account to the Controller of all his movable and immovable properties in respect of which Estate Duty is payable within six months. Sir, I think, this requires a little change because many illiterate persons who are required to pay the Duty will be unnecessarily harassed and penalised by the Controller and there will be no end of explanation in law courts simply because of the ignorance of the people about the rules of the Estate Duty. Therefore, Sir, instead of the people being asked to give an account, let the duty be cast on the Controller to issue notice to such persons who have property and who are liable to pay Estate Duty, the information about which, Sir, should be provided to the Controller by the Officers of the Thana or by the village officers. In these offices, there is a register and, not only that, Sir, these officers in the villages know all about the people who are under their jurisdiction. Therefore, Sir, it is much better to cast the entire duty on the Controller.

I find that the time given for filing the return is six months. Sir, I would like that to be curtailed; let it be only sixty days. If

you give a long period, Sir, then many of the movable property may go underground. Therefore, it is better that the time is curtailed to sixty days.

I have only one or two words more. I find that the penalty clause is very light. If the Finance Minister wishes to have the full revenue extracted from the rich people, then Sir, I would ask him to make the penalty clause heavy and more effective. What is a thousand rupees as double duty to the rich people? It is a mere drop in the ocean. If the penalty clause is such that if any person makes a false declaration or gives false accounts he would forfeit half of his property, you will find, Sir, that there would be no such false accounts. Here, I would quote a case, Sir. In Orissa, there was'a Ruling Chief. He was most conservative and orthodox; he would have nothing of British ways in his State but he was a hard taskmaster and it was a rule of his State that'any person plucking a green mango or ripe mango from a tree, would be jailed not only for that mango season but for another mango season and he must undergo rigorous imprisonment. You may say that it is a very hard punishment but look at the effect it had. A friend of the Raja asked him why he was so hard on his tenants. The answer was, " Look here, I have got 10 to 15 thousand mango trees in my State. They do not bring any revenue to my State and if I have to keep watchers to watch these mango trees it would cost me much. You know the mango is the most delicious and nutritious fruit and helps the tenants to keep their bodies quite fit. But if these are plucked when they are quite green, " then my tenants, " he said," are prevented from getting nourishing food. Therefore, I made this rule. I have told my tenants that they can take away all mangoes which are falling from the trees. You would be surprised that even a merchant from the towns used to come, collect the mangoes falling and then sell them in the market and he was not charged any duty." But, the Ruling Chief was very strong on this point that if any one plucks a green mango, he would be jailed. The Chief told his friend " Do you know how many I have jailed within the last ten years? Only two persons because the punishment is so severe it naturally prevents people from doing the same thing again. " Therefore, Sir, I say that if our Finance Minister wants to collect the revenue he should be very strict; he should increase the punishment by putting it in the Bill that if any person makes a false declaration or false affidavit, he will forfeit half of his property; if he does that, he would find. Sir, there would be a check. If you don't and

if you do as it is in the Bill, it may be just like black marketing and you will have another set of people enriching themselves.

There is one more thing, Sir, which strikes me. It strikes me, in the nature of things, that when a return is to be given, you will find much valuable property will not be accounted for and, to that extent, therefore, the Government would lose its revenue. May I ask the Finance Minister whether he would not make a law that all persons having assets over a sum of Rs. 75,000 or one lakh of rupees should file a statement during his life time and any appreciation or depreciation, addition or subtraction from this property should be made known to the Controller from year to year, so that the Controller may find it easy to get the revenue collected ?

I will not take much of your time. You have been very patient and you have given me a patient hearing. I leave all the intricate points for my colleagues, who are, I am sure, very capable and they will be able to deal with them more ably than I could do.

SHRI C. G. K. REDDY (MYSORE): No, No.

Kumari Shoila Bala Das: But, Sir, before I sit down, I wish to say once again that I support this Bill whole-heartedly and I wish that our Hon. Finance Minister will be able to have a free passage for this Bill in this House.

With these words, Sir, I sit down and thank you for the opportunity given.

APPENDIX IV

Speeches on Discussion of Budget at the Council of State

Kumari Shoila Bala Das (Orissa) :

Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir,

I congratulate the Finance Minister for the way in which he has prepared this Budget. This Budget has been framed in such a way that it has been accepted with mingled feelings. On our side Members have accepted this Budget and thanked the Finance Minister and congratulated him for having conferred benefit to the country by presenting this Budget and on the other side the Opposition has criticised the Budget, as it is the duty of the Opposition to criticise everything which comes from this side. I would like to tell you in this House, Sir, that during the last two years of my experience here, I have learnt much from the Opposition. My eyes have been opened to many things which I did not know before. I found that the Opposition many a time placed constructive suggestions and I think that if my Government had accepted some of these suggestions, the position of the Government would have been very different from what it is today. My colleagues of this side said that in this budget the Finance Minister has very carefully and thoughtfully considered the common man, *i.e.* the villager, as they are not required to pay any duty on soap and cloth. But they forget that the common man is found not only in the villages but also in the streets, in the gullies and in the busties of every town and city. What about these common men ? Are they not entitled to pay any duty on soap and cloth ?

Sir, I do not wish to say anything about the merits and demerits of the Budget simply because I am ashamed to tell you that I have not studied the Budget at all owing to my defective vision, but from what little I have seen of this Budget or what little I have heard of it here from this side and the other side, I feel that it would have been better if the Finance Minister had not taxed the common man's soap and cloth. He could easily have taxed the rich people. There are duties on luxury goods. He could have increased those duties. What about cigarettes and tobacco, luxury cars, perfumes of all kinds, powders, lipsticks etc.? Also the cutlery and crockery which the rich people purchase for their comfort. If these goods had been taxed even 100 percent, I am sure the rich people would have paid it, because they have

purchasing power, whereas the common man cannot pay even two pice more than what he is paying today. The common man cannot get even two square meals a day, though our Food and Agriculture Minister said the other day that there is self-sufficiency in food. I would like to ask "Where is this self-sufficiency, when the common man cannot get even two meals a day?" You know that the market price of rice has gone up. Perhaps our Food and Agriculture Minister does not know that it has gone up from six annas to ten annas per seer. I would say that there is self-sufficiency in food only when I find that common man cannot get rice at three or four seers per rupee, not before that.

Sir, my province is a rice-growing province. I would like to know what has happened to the good rice that we have had all along? The other day the Food Minister said that all the bad rice comes from Orissa. In my state we have got very good rice too. I would like to say to the Food Minister that he collects and puts all the bad rice in the ration shops to be given to the people and sends all the good rice to the black market so that they could get more profit. I must say it that if he had efficient men in his department all the good rice would not have found shelter in the black market.

Much has been said about the Five Year Plan. I am sorry to say that I have not seen the work of the Five Year Plan because I have not visited the Community Project but I do believe that tbe Five Year Plan has done some good even though not to the extent that money has been spent upon it. There is the unemployment problem and I do believe that the Five Year Plan has, to a certain extent, solved this problem but not altogether. The question is getting acuter and acuter every day, and what is my Government going to do about it? Unless you tackle this problem, the young men who are unemployed will be in the Communist Party. Will that be good for Government? Government should try and find out some means to give employment to our unemployed men.

I rejoice to find that the Five Year Plan has given birth to a baby girl, called the Women's Social Welfare Board, and the guardian of this baby girl, I am proud to say, is again a woman, and the Government trusts this woman. She is in charge of this baby girl and Rs. 4 crores have been placed in charge of this guardian to be distributed among women's voluntary associations in the country for expansion and development and also to start new

women's associations where it is required. But I am afraid that this baby girl will not be able to spend this money discreetly, because I will give some examples from which you will find that the money which has been given to this Social Welfare Board is not properly spent. This Social Welfare Board gets applications from throughout the country and according to its discretion, it distributes money to various women's agencies. It has got some Advisory Body to work for it. It has called Advisory Panels of Women. It has got three such panels, the Children's Panel, the Women's Panel, and the Delinquent Children's Panel. Now I want to say something about the Panel for children and you will see how money is being wasted by this Panel. This baby girl is not yet grown up to take charge of so much money. I have got a programme here which has been sent to me in my state about the prospective visit of the Panel for Children and this is a Five Day Programme. You will be surprised to see how these Panels travel. They travel by plane in a right-lordly fashion or in air-conditioned first class carriages. They are received by the State Government and taken to the Government House as guests or they are taken to the State Circuit House where they are provided with all creature comforts, and yet they get T.A. and D.A. from the Social Welfare Board. Now, this Panel is supposed to see the Children's Associations and the work which is being carried on in the State about children, but instead of that this programme has been made by the State Government in consultation with the Deputy Health Minister. Now in this programme you will find a four hours' visit is given to the Government medical institution. Can you tell me what this Children's Panel has got to do with the Government medical institution? It is women's voluntary work they are going to see. Instead of that in this programme we find four hours are to be given to the Government Medical Institution. So four hours have been wasted. Then I find that on the same day they have got three hours to go and see the poor cottage industry. Then they are going to be entertained for two and half hours. So three hours are given for this purpose. I would like to know what these women have got to do with the inspection of the Cottage Industries. That is a department for another women's Board. But here I find this Panel cannot understand what their business is. They only go to places for their own pleasure. Again I find two hours are given in the two days for press representatives. What are they going to do with the press? What things are they going to say to the press? They themselves do not know for what purpose they have come to my

State and yet here I find two hours are given to the press representatives. Then the funniest thing is, on the next day they want to spend seven hours to go to a State which was a Ruler's State before and now it is merged. It is 80 miles from Cuttack and they want to go in a motor car, take rest and have lunch with the Deputy Health Minister, see only the Government medical hospital and the place where the Deputy Health Minister has started a small Children's Welfare Work. Is it worth while to go to 80 miles and see only this work, whereas there are half-a-dozen children's Associations in my State which can easily be seen and the problem could be solved. The most regrettable part is though this is the Children's Panel, they never thought that it is their duty to see hundreds of leper children in Cuttack. My State Government does not do much for these Lepers' Children and it is only the missionaries who are connected with it and the Government only give some grants to them and they think that their duty has been done, though it is the duty of the Health Department to see that we do not all become lepers because all these children who have leper parents may be infected in a very short time if they are not segregated and it is very essential that these leper children should have a hostel which should be segregated from their parents but instead of solving this problem, this Childrens' Panel who go to my State, only go for pleasure and for their own enjoyment. Another thing is I had a letter from the Secretary of the Social Welfare Board that to-day the Women's Panel is coming to my state to see my institution Maternity and Child-Welfare Centre. They will arrive to-day from the south and they will leave that place to-night. Can you imagine what they can see in a few hours time in Puri and other places where there are many Women's Associations and they require grants and they want that this Women's Panel should go and visit them. Instead of that they just come to the town, enjoy life, attend parties, have dinner in Government House and they get T.A. and D.A. and they go back to their own places. This is the work that your Welfare Board is doing.

Again I should like to tell you that it is much better that instead of wasting the money on this panel, you should abolish this Panel. The Chairman of the Social Welfare Board should advertise in a paper. She can get a number of applications and the applications should be sent in duplicate forms, one to the Board and the other to respective State Governments. The Governments should be asked to forward this application with their recommendation and remarks to the Social Welfare Board so that there will be

no bogus association and you can do away with Panel altogether. Now about this Women's panel which has already come to my State to-day, I should like to say this that they left the place on the 5th February, they had one month's trip. They went to Madras, Madura, Trichinopoly, Bangalore, Travancore-Cochin and all these places of archeological interest and then at last they have taken a trip to Ceylon. So I hear I do not know whether the Social Welfare Board is going to pay for their trip to Ceylon even but I know this much that they will be the State guests of the Ceylon Government. Now on their way back they cannot afford much time for Orissa. They are now coming for a few hours just to say that they have visited. Orissa Women's Association and on their report will depend our grant. I think this baby girl should be looked after carefully by the guardian who is an experienced guardian. Otherwise the money which has been given in charge of this baby girl will be wasted. The Women's Associations or the Children's Associations would not be benefitted.

Now I should like to say a few words about rehabilitation. The Government is spending much money for rehabi litation. Whether the Government is justified or not I am not going to say anything but it is enough that the Government has spent money. A couple of years ago a few thousand displaced persons from East Bengal came to Orissa. Whether it was the fault of my Government or through the fault of these displaced persons, I do not know, but they ran away from Orissa. Now again a fresh batch has come. I have not seen this batch yet nor have I gone to their camp. But friends who have come and told me that these displaced persons have got real and imaginary grievances. One thing I found out is that these displaced persons think that it is not through their own fault they have left their homes and come here. They think that it is the duty of our Government to feed them, to maintain them, to look after them and if the Government 'fail to do it, naturally they feel disappointed. I tried to help some of their women by taking them in my institution to give them training in midwifery course. But I find though we had to give them Rs. 17/8/- a month they do not like to do any work. They only came to get the allowances. Again in our Women's Association we tried to get hold of these women and teach them sewing, knitting etc., in order to see that they will be able to earn some money. But I found that they were very lazy. These women from East Bengal, they do not wish to do any work they do not like to earn money by doing honest work, but they want that the Government should support them. Sir, in this connection I would

like to get my answer from the Rehabilitation Minister to whom I put some questions in August last.

An Honorable Minister :—But he is not here.

Kumari.Shoila Bala Das :—He is not here, it is true, but this is the Budget discussion and the Deputy Minister for Finance who is here will, I am sure, make it a point to tell the Rehabilitation Minister about this. Sir, in August last I sent a few questions for information and I got this reply, that "the information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House in due course." Sir, six months have elapsed and yet "this due course" has not yet come. I do not know what Government means by "due course." Is it one year? Is it two years? Or is it even half a dozen years? But this information has not yet come and I should like to add this that by nature these questions are quite simple ones. And our Government can give the answer to these questions unless there is something wrong somewhere and the Government feels uncomfortable to give the information. Here is a small question Sir, that I asked. What is the total number of the movable and immovable evacuees' properties in Orissa which have already been vested in the Custodian? The second question was; "What is the total amount of the property and estimated monthly income from all the various evacuees' properties which have been vested in the Custodian?" And then "Whether all income from these evacuees' properties is collected regularly. If not why not, whether any large amount of arrears in respect of these evacuees' properties has accumulated and will the Government lay a statement on the table showing how from month to month, these arrears have accumulated? Sir, do you think these questions are wrong? What is there in them that my Government cannot answer these questions? And not only that, the Rehabilitation Minister also does not insist on the State Government to give the answer. The Custodian is generally appointed with the consent or with the approval of the Central Rehabilitation Minister and it is the duty of the Rehabilitation Minister when questions of this nature are sent to find out the information or to insist for the information from the State Government. You may think that I am in the wrong, but it seems to me that there is something wrong somewhere, or my Government feels uncomfortable to give the answer to these questions. What

is there in these questions? I will say it is the fault of my Central Rehabilitation Minister not to insist for the information and by doing this by not getting this information, he is winking at corruption and this should be stopped. And if the Central Ministers do not act strongly and promptly, Sir, you will never be able to root out corruption which you know is growing daily.

Now I would like to say something about the Income-tax department and the Customs. I am not going to say anything in a spirit of criticism, but my object is to draw the attention of the respective Deputy Ministers to this and to see that the name of the Congress Government is not tainted. As you know, that the name is already badly tainted and the Congress is losing ground. I say this corruption must be stopped. I know it is very difficult to put a stop to the corruption. But if my Honorable Ministers are strict, and they are honest no doubt about it as I believe they are honest, and if they are strong too, they will be able to a certain extent to put a stop to corruption.

Sir, you know the Income-tax and Customs are Central Revenues and these two departments give revenue to the Central exchequer. If these two departments are corrupt, then the Government loses the revenue. I approached my Honorable Deputy Finance Minister sometime ago and brought some cases before him. And I may tell you that he is always prompt in taking action. As soon as I approached him he took action. But what can he do, Sir, though he is a mighty person, no doubt about it, and he occupies a high position in the Government, but what can he do? He has to depend on the administrative machinery—the Ministry. and Sir, I regret to say that this Ministry is not always competent to do work fairly.

Then I would like to say another thing. In the Income-tax Department in my state, Sir,—I am always saying it from my personal experience, for you know I am constantly asking questions about income-tax, I found that in 1949 such big cases were pending even till 1952-53. May I know why these cases, these big cases remain pending for a such long time? Is it because the Income-tax Officer does not find it suitable to pass nis order? And do you know Sir, these big cases are always cases of businessmen, and you also know that in the lives of businessmen, there are ups and downs and they may sustain losses or they may leave the State and if they do that then you loose all the revenues. What precautions Sir, does the Income tax department take to see that they do

not lose this revenue? To-day the Honorable Deputy Finance Minister said that so many thousands of cases are still pending up to 31st March. What can you do? He can pass orders to the Ministry. The Ministry will pass orders to the Board. The Board will pass orders to the Commissioner and the Commissioner to the Assistant-Commissioner and then it will go to the Income-tax Officer. And these Income tax Officers, I have seen in many cases, have heard the cases, examined the books, scrutinised the accounts but they do not pass the order. Then in the meantime Sir, perhaps this particular officer is transferred and when he is transferred, the new officer comes and he wants to begin hearing again. Look at the harassment of your assessee and naturally on account of these harassments your Government is losing ground to-day. The Hon. Deputy Minister for Finance I know is very keen on putting down corruption. I do hope Sir, that hewill try to make the officers do their work a little more efficiently. I find fault with the Commissioner of Income tax. You know, Sir, these Commissioners are mighty powerful officers. They can promote a person, send a man to the seventh heaven or they can mar the future of a junior officer. The promotion depends on the remarks of these Commissioners. Therefore, Sir, I would like to suggest for the consideration of the Deputy Finance Minister that he should send out instructions that the Assistant Commissioners when examining the departments should while sending the report, in duplicate, one copy to the Board and the other to the Commissioner so that there would not be any fear of this paper being tampered with in the office of the Commissioner.

Now, only one word about the Custom department. I do not wish to say much about this as I have already approached the Deputy Finance Minister customs who has promised to look into the matter. Still I would like to draw the attention of the Deputy Minister to the question of the preventive officers. You know Sir, that in the port of Calcutta, there are innumerable Preventive officers. Their basic pay is about Rs. 88/-. I may be wrong and the Hon. Minister may correct me and with the dearness and other allowances they get a total of

Rs. 165/-. per month. But doing overtime work they may get upto Rs. 300/-. If you look at the way they live in Calcutta, I do not think even the Deputy Finance Minister will be able to live in that a style. I would like to know how these Preventive Officers live in such a style? Why do not the Superior officers go into this matter and see about them? You all know, Sir, I have heard that 90% of these Preventive Officers in the Calcutta Port are corrupt. Sir, I do not know why the Finance Minister keeps these Preventive Officers as a fixture in one Port? There are so many ports in India? Why cannot they be transferred every two years so that they may not carry on even illegal business in their wives' names?

With these few words I want to say once more, Sir that I am not saying anything in a spirit of criticism but my object is that this Government, which has got independence, should see that its name is not tainted by corruption. You must see that your Officers do their work properly and efficiently and you must put a check to corruption. Thank you, Sir, for giving me patient hearing. I have finished now. Thank you.

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